

Mycelium

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Gently disintegrate me
- WS Graham

Speech in (brackets) indicates an overlap in dialogue or sound.

Speech in italics indicates a memory.

Mother: *(whispered in ear) Once upon a time, mushrooms ruled the land. Before animals, before trees even - they were the great titans of their age.*

Jenny: *What happened to them?*

Mother: *(whispered in ear) Nothing, sweet - they're still there. In the mud and the silt, hiding deep down in the dark of the earth.*

Jenny: *What are they hiding from?*

Mother: *(Whispered in ear) They are hiding from you.*

//

Sounds from a crackling home video. A family gathering. Chatter. Music.

Jenny: When I was a kid, I would do this dance. My family called it the mushroom dance.

Mother: *(On the video, a little muffled) Jenny's dancing! Oh yes, shuffle-one-two-three-four and ARMS. Yaaaay!'*

Jenny: I would start small on the floor, cuddled up in a ball
and then
slowly-slowly
wriggling my pudgy toddler hips
I would unfurl
stumbling on to my knees
raising my arms above my head -
and then running about the room, blowing raspberries at everything and everyone,
spreading around my wet mushroomy spores.
And whoever was in the firing line
whoever essentially got spat on
had to curl up into a ball themselves and it was their turn to do the dance next.
They would grow their roots

and spread their spores
until the whole room was on their feet
pretending to be mushrooms.

Cracking from the home video - lots of raspberries being blown, easy laughter - and then it is turned off.

Jenny: The dance was all mum's idea. And if she was into it - I was into it.
I was obsessed with every part of her as a kid.
Her hair, her voice.
The way she smelt of mud when she came
home from a day - in the field
as she called it.
Field, forest, marsh. It didn't matter to her.
As long as there were mushrooms. Because if there were
mushrooms
there was also life -

Mother: *(a memory) What could be more amazing than studying life itself Jenny!*

Jenny: I was desperate to grow up so I could
also be
in the field,
and see this world that
she was a part of when
she left the house each morning.

Jokes. (or lol, or a snort etc anything that shows disdain at her younger self)

I left school. I went to college.
I became one of those mildly tricky teenagers,
not drugs,
or anything like that.
just mean sometimes.
In the way that children can be.

And mum and I,
it became a
struggle
for us to understand each other.
Common ground rapidly disappearing under the
tide of my approaching adulthood.

I went and did biology at uni,
that was all I really knew at the end of the day -
trees and dirt and midges.
And from there I got a job at a lab
in the city,
which was very much not 'in the field',
and then -

She disappeared.

//

Bleep, recording starts.

- Soil sample BH13OP. Grid reference 1637. Loam, clay, sand. Test tube turns orange indicating high acidity. Mycelium present at 12% -

Bleep, recording stops.

Some mornings I worry that I will be late into work,
the buses are reliably unreliable.
Other days
I couldn't give less of a fuck.

Sarah
my line manager
asks me to *just send her a text*
to give her the heads up.
It is her job to know if I am late.
I don't know how to say that
Buchan Bus Station is the actual hell hole of Glasgow at 8:50 in the morning and
if you could just pay me enough to get the train instead,
that would be great.

Bleep, recording starts.

- Soil sample IK87HT. Grid reference 1952. Peat based composition. Test tube turns yellow indicating medium acidity. Mycelium present at 18.5% -

Bleep, recording stops.

Each day I try to process around thirty samples before lunch.
Mostly because I have to get through a minimum of
forty a day
to meet my quota of two hundred for the week,
so that Sarah
and the suits above *her*
can meet their targets
KPI's
quarterly strategic planning measures
and after lunch I rarely have the energy to get through more than fifteen.
I do keep trying to cut out gluten because
Molly from IT
says that gluten is often associated with a post lunch brain fog.
But I'm not much of a soup girl.
And if I were to have soup, I'd want bread and butter with it anyway.

Most of the samples tested in the lab are from
large intensive commercial farms around the country.
Wanting to optimise crop production.
Wanting the data so that they can
squeeze as much as
they can from
their patch of land.

Bleep, recording starts.

- Soil sample SW87IQ. Grid reference 1899. Sand, clay. Test tube turns green indicating low acidity. High level of nitrates. Mycelium present at 22.7 % -

Bleep, recording stops.

After lunch Molly pops into the lab.
She looks nice.
how are you - she says.
I'm fine - how are you? *Fine-yep-good.*

How are you?
It is a
weird question,
obscuring rather than opening.
How are you.
I'm fine. I'm fine.
Fine in the way that I was hoping for a dog for my birthday but I got a gerbil instead
fine. But also,
fine in the sense that no I'm probably not fine
which is what I would say if I was being honest.
Which I'm not, so -

Molly looks at my screen.
Lists of numbers and letters -
Wow, that's a lot of data.

Yep,
it is, I reply.

In the silence she nods and goes back to her desk.

Sometimes I think I may as well hold a metal rod to the heavens,
And beg for what comes next.

WhatsApp voice note - played on Jenny's phone.

Friend: Hey girl. How are you today? The best weekend for a while no? I hope you're having a good day at work. I just wanted to check in and see how you're doing because you were chatting some strange stuff last night - mushrooms taking over the planet? That's some apocalyptic shit right there. And you were doing this hilarious dance - I'll send you a video - it was cracking me UP! Anyway, catch you soon.

Swoosh of a sent video message.

The video is opened and played on Jenny's phone. A muffled (and being played at a club) version of something cheesy like I'm With You by Avril Lavigne plays – 'Trying to figure out this life. Won't you take me by the - ' a few seconds, and then it is quickly shut off.

Jenny: That's enough of that -

Anyway,
after work,
the business of getting home to the
familiar and the kind-of warm for a bit.
The bus crawls, excruciatingly slow,
cold and humid.
The girl sitting next to me is reading Matilda.
Which is nice,
I'm glad kids still read those books.
I think about pulling out my headphones and saying *great book.*

Mother: *(a memory) but when you were born you just didn't look much like a Matilda, and anyway Miss Honey is the true hero of the book which is why we named you -*

Jenny: Most people don't know that Miss Honey's first name is Jennifer.
Like me.
Jenny, Jen.
And actually,
I had mostly forgotten about her being my namesake until that moment
so I lean over to say -
But then Kevin texts - how are you?

I asked a boy fluent in tea and ginger biscuits
To scale mountains he couldn't see
in the name of
loving me properly.
And now,
I am still getting used to weekends by myself.

I respond with
Fine, how are you?
Because the line between trying to understand the world and self-pity is
very thin.

The girl gets off at the St Bridge Street park and ride.

It's probably weird to talk to kids on buses anyway.

I buy a tin of baked beans and a loaf of bread from
the small Tesco's on the corner.
I think about buying food for the week, but all I can
decide on
is a six pack of satsumas.

*Over the Tesco's tannoy - 'Please can Jenny Lynn make her way to aisle eight where
her mother is waiting for her'.*

Empty spaces make the most noise and I am
losing this room to a flood.

(sound beat? Something mother related?)

//

When I get home, I think about doing some yoga,
but I don't.
I fall stomach first on to my bed
and scroll for half an hour
only to feel guilty about it
but not guilty enough because I continue scrolling for twenty minutes more
and have to take a shower to break the cycle.

After the shower I move from my phone to my laptop and
auto play mindlessly through the
YouTube algorithm.

Blackpink music videos.
5 times Robert Patterson was a chaotic Taurus. (*'I got suspended for saving the
Kevin texts back snails'*)

I open the message and
leave him on read.
Sloths.
Tutorials on how to eat five burgers in five seconds,
And then -

A recording of a lecture, a small voice in a loud cavernous room –

Mother: *The mushrooms we see growing on the forest floor, on the sides of trees, out of a fallen branch are merely the visible fruiting bodies of a much larger organism. In a classification all of their own - but closer to animals than to plants - fungi spread far and wide in the earth beneath our feet by creating a labyrinth of roots called mycelium. Through the mycelium, fungi connect soil to tree, plant to plant - transporting nutrients, alarm signals, linking every tree in the forest in this huge network of everything.*

Jenny: A recording of my mother -

2003, at the University of Stockholm,
a large auditorium
a room full of people watching her, listening to her words

I found it in the depths of the internet
not long after she disappeared.

Back to the recording -

Mother: *Mycelium acts as the communication superhighway, enabling the trees to function as an inter-connected society.*

Jenny: I have home photos from before,
and wedding pictures - images of her as a mother, a wife.

But this is not that.
This is the other her that -

Wow,
it is freezing in her absence.

//

Beeeeep, recording starts.

- Soil sample SW871Q. Grid reference 1899. Sand, clay. Test tube turns yellow, indicating low acidity. Mycelium present at 12% -

Beeeeep, recording stops.

An email from building management -
The coffee machine has broken - coffee machines don't break themselves. Please go elsewhere for your coffees until further notice.

There's a new guy joining the team today.
Elliott, I think.

Which is spelt with two L's and two T's.

Sarah is doing his induction stuff.

Clients, health and safety.

I make a joke about how I was made to re-do my health and safety training because Sarah caught me trying to

rescue a crumpet
out of the toaster
with a knife.

No-one laughs.

Health and safety is not a laughing matter.

A memory, rattling around inside Jenny's head -

Mother: - it's not a good week.

Jenny: But it's never a good week - every time I ask.

Mother: (sigh) The thing is, when I'm in the field, it's, you know - busy and I have to concentrate, and there are health and safety things associated with having a child -

Jenny: I'm not a child -

Mother: - and I don't have the headspace to deal with -

Jenny: I think that you just don't want me to come with you.

Mother: If I'm being completely honest Jenny, no I don't. You sulk, you get angry -

Jenny: I'm the one that gets angry??

Beeeeep, recording starts.

- Soil sample KW41FI. Grid reference 1727. High in nitrates. Test tube turns red indicating high acidity. Mycelium present at 21.4 % -

Beeeeep, recording stops.

WhatsApp voice note -

Yasmin: Heyyyy did you get my message? Haven't heard from you in few days. Just making some plans for the weekend. It's Jake's birthday so maybe some drinks on Saturday? I think that girl is going to be there - Ellen? Just saying. ANYWAY, don't be a stranger. Love you.

Jenny: Just saying.

When I think about all the things I didn't just say and all the things that I did because I could, it makes me
so - (fucking mad) - but it is beeped over by -

Beeeeep, recording starts.

- Soil sample NB37GU. Grid reference - 1521. Silt. Loam. Test tube turns yellow indicating medium acidity level. Mycelium present at 89.3 % -

Beeeeep, recording stops.

What.

I check again.

Grid reference 1521 and
mycelium at 89.3%.

89.3 % - that's a crazy high concentration.
Far too high.
I've never seen it so -

Grid reference 1521.
An area of forest
Not far from where -
And I know I shouldn't,
Because it's not -
But
I can't not and maybe -

I open the petri dish
reach
touch
gently shake out the soil
hold it in the palm of my hand
between the tips of my fingers and -

*We hear the noise of the universe. Full on binaural for the first time. Loud. 360.
Beautiful, scientific, all encompassing - a network of everything. Everything in the
world and everything in Jenny. And in amongst all this is mixed Mother's song, and
very faintly, barely audible (in fact some people might not hear it, and that's fine) a
whisper of 'Jenny, Jenny'.*

//

It wasn't that Mum and I fell out.

We just stopped being able to communicate without
ripping pieces off each other.

I was stuck somewhere between who I
wanted to be and who I
was and the
older I got the more
impenetrable I found her
like she was holding me at arm's length
and I think she just found me -

Mother: (a memory) Sometime I just don't recognise you anymore -

Jenny: And then she was losing the edges of herself and how scary that must have been.
And how scared I was about the disintegration of her
grasping at her
trying to hold the falling tide in my hands
until she got washed away completely.

//

I hold off and off,
until everyone's gone home for the evening.

The storage fridges hum.

The door is far too squeaky. I've never noticed before.

-

Land Skeins: Autumn

-

It's gone.

Fuck.

Shit.

Soil sample NB37GU. Grid reference - 1521.

Gone from storage to the incinerator, the next lab, the people further up the chain.

I should've -

What an idiot.

Okay.

Okay.

Mother: (a memory)
Say it - say mush-room -
Say fun-gi -

-

-

Jenny: I wake up.

I cycle to the pool but forget my flip flops.

I can feel other people's verruca's sticking to the bottom of my feet.

The water is mild.

I slip in easily.

People chat.

Their voices boom and warp in the empty space above the water.

A child laughs.

It sounds like lightening.

Another memory flies into Jenny's head -

Mother: (fragile) Who are you?

Jenny: *It's me mum - Jenny.*

Mother: Who's Jenny? I don't recognise you?

It flies out again.

Jenny: I walk to the park off The Great Western Road.

Past the coffee shop in the middle.

It is a nice day.

Sit on the bench.

Make sure that my laces are tied.

I would love to calm down

But the world is soaked in it

Like sponge cake and syrup.

And then I walk.

And I walk and I

walk and I

walk and I
walk
until I get to grid reference 1521
mycelium at 89.3%
I fall to my knees,
I put my hands into the soil and -

A return to the soundscape on page 8, mixed heavily with Mother's song and then from the soundscape comes -

Mother: *(far away, not a question)* Jenny. Jenny.

Jenny: -

Mother: *(Closer)* Jenny. *(repeated for as long as it takes for Mother to get close to Jenny)*

Jenny: Mum?

Mother: *(In the same space now)* Hi there sweet.

(There is a sense that Jenny and Mother are occupying the same space as the soundscape, a different place from where Jenny has been up to now – ethereal, slightly detached from the 'real world')

Jenny: -

Hello -

Mother: *(gentle, teasing)* Haven't seen you in a while -

Jenny: *(Jenny is trying to take all this in. She swallows, or something to indicate that she doesn't quite know what to say)*

Where have you been, Mum?

Mother: Oh sweetie -

Jenny: You disappeared.

Mother: I'm here now.

Jenny: -

I'm here now.

Mother: It's good to hear your voice.

Jenny: I'm sorry that it's taken me - (so long)

Mother: Don't you worry about it.

Jenny: -

Mother: So, tell me - how are you?

Jenny: I'm fine, I guess.

Mother: I'm glad you're - (fine)

Jenny: Okay, please don't sweep the mess of my feelings under the carpet.

Mother: Alright, alright - I didn't -

Jenny: Where did you go?

Mother: I wish I could tell you, sweet.

Jenny: I want to understand.

Mother: I know but I'm unsure myself - about the edges of things.
There was decay at work, I think.
A mess of debris.
The connections between things started to snap and fade and somewhere along the line,
I got lost.

Jenny: It was too soon.
There were things that we left unsaid.

Mother: Did we?

Jenny: You don't think so?

Mother: I think that sometimes life can feel empty and chaotic at the same time and it's hard to hold to all the things that you need to in order to make it all make sense.

Jenny: -

Mother: I was only twenty-five when you were born,
not that much older than you are now.
I didn't know the first thing about being a mother.
But I did know that you were the roundest, sweetest thing,
that's why we named you -

Jenny: After Miss Honey -

Mother: Exactly.
Our sweet Jenny.
And I had new names too.
Mother. Wife.
And I didn't always find them the easiest to put on.
I found it hard to move from field and work,
to nursery and kitchen.
And I'm sorry about that.

Jenny: I would've come with you - to the field, to the forest -

Mother: I know. But I needed something for myself.
Something that was just mine.

Jenny: Why didn't you just say that?

Mother: Because saying something out loud is powerful.

Jenny: -
I think I had a tendency to be quite cruel sometime.

Mother: *(laughter)* You think?!

Jenny: (*defensive*) Alright!

And when you started to forget - I found it frightening to be close to.

I put so much space between us as a buffer and -

And I wish I had been braver. For me and for you.

Mother: -

I don't want you worrying about me.

But I do want to know how you are?

Jenny: I don't know really.

Mother: Go on -

Jenny: I'm confused,
a lot of the time.
And quite lonely
a large majority of the time.
Seemingly very unsure
about everything.
My body
is full of lines of data and
incentives
and messages
and adverts
and artificial light
And I am unsure how I fit in amongst all the chatter.
Sometimes I want the groundwater to rise up
And wash it all away
so that I can start again
become grit and slit and mud
and river and slope and ditch.
And I miss you.
I miss the you that I had,
and the you that I didn't get to know.

Mother: -

Can I give you some advice?

Jenny: Mother to daughter?

Mother: Exactly.

Jenny: Alright.

Mother: Listen to yourself deeply.

Say who you are and what you want as often as you can.

Jenny: I don't know if I have the words.

You are the holder of some many of my memories and you are lost.

Mother: I'm still here.

Jenny: But you are just a body now, empty of everything.

Mother: Does this feel empty of everything to you?

Jenny: -

No.

Mother: Shall we do this again sometime?

Jenny: Yes please.

Mother: I love you, sweet.

Jenny: I love you too.

//

Beeeeep, recording starts.

Jenny: Soil sample NB37GU. Grid reference - 1521. Strong winds and rain overnight and this morning the woodland floor is covered in leaf fall. An array of colours. Golden yellows and red and ruby red and orange. I start small, curled up in ball and then - Common Inkcap. Fly Agaric. Tawny Grisette. Chicken of the Woods. Parasol. They are all here, pushing up through the wet mulch of the forest floor, making the most of the fallen leaves, the rotting wood. Sharing around the fruits of decay. Connecting soil to tree, water to plant and Molly from IT pops over. I tell her that she looks nice and she smiles and we go for lunch. Morel, oyster. A feast. I lie down on a bed of lichen six inches thick and out of my ears, my toes, my fingers, hang a lattice of tiny white threads, mycelium at 89.3 %, deep down, in the dark of earth -

Mother: *(whispered in ear)* Jenny. Jenny.

Beeeeep, recording stops.

SCENE 1 **WAREHOUSE****FX** **POP MUSIC FROM WAREHOUSE****FX** **LORRY REVERSING / WAREHOUSE SOUNDS****FX** **PHYSICAL STRAIN AS THEY LOAD THE VAN**

1	NOAH	Why do rich people buy so much bottled water?
2	LILY	No idea.
3	NOAH	Take the piss.
4	LILY	Maybe the tap water in Hammersmith and Fulham is poisoned?
5	NOAH	Doubt it. Tap water's good for you, y'know?
6	LILY	I was joking, obviously.
7	NOAH	I know. But tap water is good for you.
8	LILY	Yes okay, Chris Whitty.
9	NOAH	Who's that?
10	LILY	Doesn't matter.
11	NOAH	And what's mad is that when water really does run out -like, when the Thames just goes dry, and the oceans are just basically plastic and stuff – that's when the bottled water is gonna be like gold dust, y'know?
12	LILY	Right.
13	NOAH	That's why they want it. Just in case. For the apocalypse. Except it won't be fire and hell. More like, San Pellegrino and mass drought.
14	LILY	Great. Thanks, Noah, for that cheering festive message.

FX **LILY STRUGGLES**

15	LILY	Christ on a bike –
16	NOAH	You okay, Lily?
17	LILY	Obviously not.

FX **NOAH STRUGGLES**

18	NOAH	Bloody hell that's a massive turkey.
19	LILY	Innit?

FX **PHYSICAL STRUGGLE****FX** **ITEMS PASSED BACK AND FORTH**

20 NOAH You got Netflix?

21 LILY You what?

22 NOAH Have you got Netflix?

23 LILY Yeah.

24 NOAH Cool.

25 LILY Is that it?

26 NOAH Huh?

27 LILY Never mind.

28 NOAH I was just wondering, y'know.

29 LILY Right.

30 NOAH You got Prime?

31 LILY Noah, can we not?

32 NOAH Not what?

33 LILY Chat shit.

34 NOAH Oh.

35 LILY Sorry, I know that sounds rude -

36 NOAH It's okay.

37 LILY No, it's rude, I'm sorry, I just... my dad asks stuff like that. All the time. It's relentless and it's supposed to be sweet and earnest and his cheeky funny dad way of dismantling the invisible shitness of our family and... well. Well. There we are.

38 NOAH Sorry.

39 LILY No. No. Don't apologise. I'm sorry. It's just- it's freezing and I can barely feel my fingers.

FX **LOUDER POP MUSIC FROM WAREHOUSE**

I fucking hate this song. If they're gonna plug this shit directly into our ear canals as if it's actually inspiring us to do any work, why not play something actually inspiring?

40 NOAH Like what?

41 LILY Fucking... Bon Iver. I dunno.

42 NOAH Bon what?

43 LILY I mean, not just him, but like...anything. Anything that actually takes us away from this bleak little warehouse off the North bloody Circular. D'you know what I mean?

44 NOAH Sort of.

45 LILY What gives them the right to blast this at us every single minute of every single shift? Is it not bad enough that we're forced to work for about two pence an hour wearing stupid high vis picking stupid food that no one's heard of for stupid rich people who can't be arsed to nip down the road to do their own bloody shopping?

46 NOAH You alright, Lily?

47 LILY Yeah totally fine, mate. Full of optimism, me.

FX POP MUSIC FADES INTO SOMETHING MORE BEAUTIFUL

48 NOAH And it's not two pence an hour.

49 LILY I know, Noah.

50 NOAH But I know it feels shit sometimes.

Pause.

Can you put these bags in with that turkey? It's the same order.

FX NOAH PASSES BAGS TO LILY

FX PHONE UNLOCKING

51 VOICEMAIL You have no new messages. Press 1 for saved messages, Press 2 for voicemail greetings -

FX PHONE HANGING UP

FX LILY LOOKS THROUGH BAGS

52 LILY Well, Mrs Turkey, looks like your new family are big fans of plant-based milk. Quite right. Keep

the cow out of the porridge, but let's stuff this dead bird and carve it up for Jesus' birthday.

FX **CALMER MUSIC FROM WAREHOUSE**

FX **PHONE UNLOCKING**

FX **RECORDING SOUND**

53 LILY Hey. It's me, obvs. Sorry. I- I mean. I know we're not, y'know, but I- I just...

FX **MESSAGE SENT PING**

Shit. Shit on it.

FX **RECORDING SOUND**

I didn't mean to press- I didn't mean for that to send. I didn't want to send that one just before. But I wanted to say- I wanted to say- I'm stressed, I think. Really very stressed.

You'd know a thing or two about that, eh? Not you, Katie, sorry, I meant this... this bird. Turkey! I know, I'm losing it. I'm at work and I'm talking to a turkey. Though actually on the stress spectrum I'm not doing too badly when I think about all the little souls that have been crushed for some hungry humans. One day, strutting around the countryside, fluttering their flesh and feathers like meaty queens; the next, abattoir. Sorry, Katie, I feel a bit indulgent but I just... better out than in. And while my increasingly numb finger is stuck on this slider function and making this into an increasingly long voice note, I just wanted you to know that I- I... I dunno. Maybe it's the cold. The dark. The fucking repetition of the 102 to Edmonton Green and the walk down the side of the A10 with my hands so deep in my pockets to keep the icy air at bay. I'm wondering what you're up to in that

big Airbnb by the sea with your big happy family, playing games and drinking tea and so far from all of this... grey. And I know I sound jealous which is probably cos I am. I'm thinking about you, over there, where hills echo and trees breath and the dawn frost winks with glee. Or something like that. I wonder if you're missing me.

FX **MESSAGE SENT PING**

54	NOAH	One more bag!
55	LILY	Christ, Noah.
56	NOAH	Sorry.
57	LILY	It's fine, you just- scared me a bit.
58	NOAH	You okay?
59	LILY	Fine.
60	NOAH	You sure?
61	LILY	I'm cold.
62	NOAH	You look like you've seen a ghost. A proper bad one.
63	LILY	Thanks, mate.

FX **VAN DOORS SLAM SHUT**

SCENE 2 **VAN**

1 LILY Wait, we're still loading -
 2 NOAH Hang about -
 3 LILY We're still in here!
 4 NOAH Bruv, we're still loading!
 5 LILY Oi!
 6 NOAH Fuck sake. Tyrell!
 7 LILY He's such an idiot.
 8 NOAH Tyrell, open up!
 9 LILY This isn't funny, you nob!
 10 NOAH Amy! Tyrell!
 11 LILY We know you fancy each other but if it all possible could you stop flirting by locking your co-workers in a fucking van!
 12 NOAH Bit chilly in here, innit?
 13 LILY It's a refrigerated van, Noah.
 14 NOAH Fair play.
 15 LILY Right -

FX **ENGINE STARTS / VAN MOVES AWAY**

FX **GROCERIES FALLING OFF SHELVES**

Oh my God.
 16 NOAH This is mad.
 17 LILY Can you stop this fucking van!
 18 NOAH This is so mad.
 19 LILY There are people in here!
 20 NOAH Shit, Lily, watch out!
 21 LILY Fuck! Fucking hell!
 22 NOAH That turkey just -
 23 LILY STOP THIS FUCKING VAN!
 24 NOAH Something's happening, man.
 25 LILY I KNOW, NOAH! WE'RE TRAPPED IN A FUCKING DELIVERY VAN!

26 NOAH I swear I just saw -
 27 LILY Argh! I can feel something... there's something
 squelchy down my back!
 28 NOAH On your high vis?
 29 LILY No! Not the high vis! My actual back! It's
 trickling down and it's gross and - urgh it's so
 cold on my skin, oh my God it's so cold it's like
 a fucking icicle it's -

FX **TRAFFIC / HORNS BLARE**

30 LILY It's a pack of satsumas!
 31 NOAH You what?
 32 LILY On my back! A squashed pack! Six of the
 fuckers! Thank fuck I thought it was like liver or
 gherkin juice or something properly grim!
 33 NOAH Okay. Grim. But not as grim. How is he driving
 so fast?
 34 LILY Who's driving?
 35 NOAH Eh?
 36 LILY You said 'he'. Who is it? I'll gross misconduct
 the fuck out of him.
 37 NOAH Oh, I dunno. I just meant -
 38 LILY I think we've been kidnapped, Noah.
 39 NOAH Lily -
 40 LILY We've been kidnapped. By a 'he'. Definitely. It's
 always a 'he'. It's one of the drivers. Or
 someone from the canteen.
 41 NOAH Lily -
 42 LILY Or that security guard! The guy from Poland.
 What's his name?
 43 NOAH Rajinder?
 44 LILY Does that sound Polish to you?
 45 NOAH Oh. Pavel?
 46 LILY Pavel's kidnapped us!

47 NOAH He's a weird guy. Obsessed with The Catherine Tate Show.

FX TRAFFIC / HORNS BLARE

FX GROCERIES FALLING OFF SHELVES

48 LILY/NOAH Argh! / Jesus Christ! / Fuck! / I think I broke a shitload of eggs! / Shit! / There's so much yolk! / etc

49 NOAH How has there not been a traffic light yet?

50 LILY What?

51 NOAH I swear if my mum gives me a lift to work we go through, like, 50 lights! This is mad!

52 LILY Must be a motorway, right?

53 NOAH I dunno.

54 LILY Has to be. Which is a real cause for concern.

55 NOAH Why?

56 LILY The guy's obviously lost it! And he's taking us with him. All the way to fuck-knows-where!

57 NOAH You don't know it's a 'he'.

58 LILY Well I do know that nothing inspiring ever happens on motorways!

FX VAN SCREAMS TO A STOP

FX HEAVY BREATHING

FX VAN DOORS UNLOCKED

59 NOAH The door's unlocked.

60 LILY Wait!

61 NOAH What?

62 LILY I dunno. I just... this is too weird. We could be anywhere.

63 NOAH We've been on the road for, like, 5 minutes. We're probably in Enfield.

64 LILY But listen!

65 NOAH What?

66 LILY Listen! It's quiet.

Pause.

67 NOAH Enfield's deceptively tranquil.

68 LILY Thanks, Martyn Gerrard.

69 NOAH Martyn...?

70 LILY Oh my God they're an estate agent. In North
London. It really doesn't matter.

FX **VAN DOORS OPEN**

SCENE 3 **COAST****FX** **COASTAL SOUNDS**

1 NOAH Um...

2 LILY What the actual f-

3 NOAH Yep. Definitely not Enfield.

FX **STEPPING ONTO SAND****FX** **DRIVER'S DOOR OPENING / CLOSING**

4 LILY I think... I think I've been here before.

FX **BREATHING IN / OUT**

It's so clean. It's so cold and so clean.

5 NOAH You okay?

6 LILY Just... breathing it in.

7 NOAH Driver's gone. Keys still there, though.

8 LILY You what?

9 NOAH No driver. Must have legged it.

10 LILY Fuck.

11 NOAH I know.

12 LILY Look at that, though.

13 NOAH It's big.

14 LILY Not just big.

15 NOAH It's massive.

FX **WAVES CRASHING**

16 NOAH Phone's got no signal.

17 LILY Amazing.

18 NOAH Can I try yours?

FX **LILY PASSES PHONE TO NOAH**

19 LILY Can you taste the salt?

20 NOAH Yours is fucked too. Shit.

21 LILY I think I came here with Katie. Last summer.

22 NOAH Really?

- 23 LILY No. It's these dunes and the water and the wind. Southwold, maybe. Or Camber Sands. We could be anywhere.
- 24 NOAH It doesn't make sense.
- 25 LILY I know. It's brilliant.
- 26 NOAH No, it's not, Lily. I was supposed to be on dinner break after we finished loading.
- 27 LILY So?
- 28 NOAH So I won't be able to scan my pass after dinner so they won't pay me for the final two hours of my shift. I'm already on a warning and Dean my line manager said that even if I'm one minute late the system will log it and -
- 29 LILY Noah, chill out. It'll be fine.
- 30 NOAH That's easy for you to say.
- 31 LILY What does that mean?
- 32 NOAH Nothing. I just...
- 33 LILY Go on.
- 34 NOAH You're from Highgate, man. You're only doing this job for Christmas and then you're back at your fancy school and then you're at uni and then you leave uni and become, I dunno, Minister for Cricket or whatever. But I've got to stick with it because-
- 35 LILY You don't know anything about me, Noah.

FX **HOWLING WINDS**

- 36 NOAH This place freaks me out.
- 37 LILY I know. Me too. I think that's why I love it. The odd noises. Soft sand on cold skin. The water that's so pure you can taste the mineral.
- 38 NOAH Calm down, San Pellegrino.
Lily laughs.

39 LILY Weird, isn't it, that some of that, there, will just disappear into thin air and then cool off and one day we'll see a big bad heavy cloud and when its droplets stop throwing their weight around... bang.

40 NOAH Bang?

41 LILY Well, splash.

42 NOAH Rain.

43 LILY Yeah.

44 NOAH Gonna be more where that came from, y'know.

45 LILY What d'you mean?

46 NOAH Next summer. 2023. I watched a documentary. Total washout.

47 LILY Rule Britannia, baby.

FX **WAVES CRASHING**

48 NOAH I can't swim.

49 LILY Really?

50 NOAH Never learned.

51 LILY I could teach you.

52 NOAH I'm alright.

Pause.

I can taste the salt.

FX **WAVES**

53 LILY Come to the beach with me.

54 NOAH Lily-

55 LILY Let's dip our toes in.

56 NOAH But-

57 LILY And then we'll drive back.

58 NOAH You promise?

59 LILY I promise.

60 NOAH Dean will be pissed.

61 LILY I don't care, Noah. I don't care about Dean, or Tyrell, or Amy, or Pavel, or any of them, alright?

I don't care about the line managers and the random security checks and the scanning our passes and the subsidised canteen and the endless bloody cycle of it all.

She starts to move away.

This is me - Lily, 17, whose parents are getting divorced and who's not revised enough for her mocks after Christmas and who wishes Katie would reply to her texts - and you...?

62 NOAH

Um, me. Noah, 19, whose parents are, um, together...

63 LILY

And?

Noah starts to move away.

64 NOAH

Who supports Arsenal and can't swim?

65 LILY

Yes! It's Lily and Noah and we're on a bloody beach!

66 NOAH

Which one?

67 LILY

No clue. But it's us and it's sand and it's blue sky and clear water and the wind is so sharp on my face! Can you feel that?

68 NOAH

Yeah. Yeah, I can.

69 LILY

Let's dip our toes in!

FX WAVES, GULLS, WIND

SCENE 4 **COAST. LATER.**

1 NOAH I can't feel my feet.
 2 LILY Neither.
 3 NOAH I think I've got frostbite.
 4 LILY You don't have frostbite.
 5 NOAH Okay.
 6 LILY It's good for you, y'know.
 7 NOAH What is?
 8 LILY The salt water. Cleanses the pores. Balances your oils, I think.
 9 NOAH That's cool.
 10 LILY Innit?

FX **SITTING ON VAN STEP**

11 NOAH Don't worry about Katie.
 12 LILY I know.
 13 NOAH It's that time of year.
 14 LILY What d'you mean?
 15 NOAH It's so dark, y'know? All the time. When I do an AM I leave the flat and it's pitch black. And then I'm in the warehouse. If the bus is on time on the way back, I see about ten minutes of light before it's gone again. And then if I'm on a PM, it's basically the other way round except I get home and I just wanna crash by the time the sun's actually coming up. And it's easier, innit, if all that cold and dark is spent with someone else. Makes you feel like you're not being left behind. But then you leave the city and the traffic and the noise and you come here, wherever this is, wherever we are, and it's like "oh, this is mad, this is what it should be about". Just you, innit? Your mind. Open and ready.

Like, I never leave the city, y'know? And it's different there. The dark is bleak and the noises get louder and you just wanna turn your headphones up and keep your head down but here, the noise should be heard in our bones or our soul or whatever. You're up against it, of course you are, the waves could take me in a second and I'd be fucked, but... you're part of it too. You want to be part of it. It's just you and it's fine.

16 LILY You're shivering, Noah.

17 NOAH How does my skin look, though?

18 LILY Gorgeous.

They laugh.

19 NOAH You might need to drive. I can't feel my fucking feet.

FX **VAN DOORS OPENING / CLOSING**

FX **ENGINE STARTS**

FX **RADIO**

20 RADIO NEWS "...and now to our main story this evening. An elderly care home resident has been reported missing. He was last seen on an unaccompanied walk in nearby woodland, something he enjoyed doing most days...."

FX **RADIO SWITCHED OFF**

FX **VAN DRIVES AWAY / FADING LAUGHTER**

FX **HEAVY THUD**

FX **COASTAL SOUNDS**

FX **TURKEY STIRS / FLAPS / FLIES**

END.

SCENE 1 **VOICE NOTE**

FX **WALKING THROUGH WOODS.**

1 OLD MAN (DISORIENTED, LOST)
*It's calling me back... I used to... I used to... to swim
there all the time when I was a little girl
I want to go back there.*

SCENE 2 **WOODS**

FX **FOREST SCAPE.**

MOTORWAY IN THE DISTANCE.

SLOW WALKING THROUGH WOODS.

DIAL TONE.

1 CELESTE Come on come on come on...

FX **DIAL TONE.**

2 CELESTE Fucks sake.
 (SHOUTING AROUND) LEE!
 Come on.
 Come on. LEE! LEE!
 (TO SELF) Lee where are you please.

FX **BIRD FLIES PAST.**

(CELESTE STARTLES)

3 CELESTE (WHISPERING) lord Jesus please protect me I pray lord
 Jesus please protect me I pray lord Jesus please protect
 me I pray lord Jesus please protect me I pray

FX **PHONE RINGS.**

4 CELESTE Oh god mum.

 (SHE LETS IT RING OUT)

SCENE 3 **WOODS**

FX **NOCTURNAL ANIMALS SCURRY.**
 FOOTSTEPS WALKING PURPOSEFULLY.
 SOUND RECORINGS OF FOREST.

1 MARCH Seventy-three.

FX **KNIFE SCRATCHES TREE.**

2 MARCH Seventy-four.

FX **KNIFE SCRATCHES TREE.**

3 MARCH Seventy-five.

FX **KNIFE SCRATCHING TREE.**

4 MARCH Seventy-six.

FX **KNIFE SCRATCHING TREE.**

5 MARCH Seventy-seven.

FX **RUNNING FOOTSTEPS APPROACH.**

6 CELESTE LEE! LEE! Stop!

(MARCH RUNS)

Wait! It's me!

(MARCH TRIPS)

SCENE 4 **WOODS**

- 1 CELESTE I'm so sorry. I thought you were
I thought
- 2 MARCH I'm fine.
- (CELESTE HELPS MARCH UP)
- 3 CELESTE Sorry, you looked like someone I
I thought you were my
- 4 MARCH (SUDDENLY REALISING) Celeste?
- 5 CELESTE (ALSO REALISES)
- 6 MARCH Fuck. I thought I was gonna get killed
I thought I was gonna die
- 7 CELESTE I didn't know it was
I didn't mean to scare you
- 8 MARCH I thought it was the end of my life
I literally saw a vision of the man who was gonna find my
body in the morning
- 9 CELESTE I'm sorry.
You really looked like
...
...
- 10 MARCH ...

I'd tell you what I thought *you* looked like, but people at school aren't gonna stop calling me mental if I keep talking about the shit I see

But you didn't look like you
If you did, I wouldn't have been so sure I was gonna die

11 CELESTE Yeah

...
I

12 MARCH What you doing out here?
Your party's on everyone's insta story aren't you supposed to be there?

13 CELESTE I

14 MARCH Just don't tell people
You don't want them thinking you're mental as well

15 CELESTE I was looking for someone
I am looking for someone

16 MARCH Who?

17 CELESTE My grandad.

18 MARCH You thought I was your grandad?

19 CELESTE No
Just
From afar it looked like

20 MARCH It looked like I was your grandad

- 21 CELESTE ...
- 22 MARCH You thought I was your / grandad
- 23 CELESTE I'm not
I'm just
- 24 MARCH Either he's got a Guinness world record or you're crazy
as well cos I was running for my life and you mistook me
for an eighty-year-old man
- 25 CELESTE You're not crazy
I just had a
I thought
- (BEAT)
- 26 CELESTE Happy birthday
- 27 MARCH ...
Yeah you too
...
Don't worry I won't tell your friends you skipped
Hakkasan to chase me through Epping Forest
- 28 CELESTE I didn't
- 29 MARCH It's a joke
- 30 CELESTE Oh
- (BEAT)

Why weren't you at college today?

31 MARCH. ...

32 CELESTE You never miss school on our birthday.

33 MARCH When we were friends.

34 CELESTE Feels like a thousand years ago.
RememberIn primary when you used to tell your mum to
buy us matching balloons and badges so we could walk
around and tell everyone we were twins even though
we're two different colours.

35 MARCH Yeah, a thousand years ago. Before you started thinking I
was weird because everyone else told you to.

(PAUSE)

Well, I hope you find your grandad.

(MARCH BEGINS TO WALK AWAY)

36 CELESTE Wait, March!

(MARCH STOPS)

Do you know how to get to the lost pond from here?

37 MARCH ...

How do you know about that?

38 CELESTE I think that's where he is

39 MARCH That's where I'm going

SCENE 5 **VOICE NOTE**

1 OLD MAN (WALKING, SINGING QUIETLY, CHILDLIKE) Happy birthday to me. Happy birthday to me. Happy birthday to Celeste. Happy birthday to me.
How old am I now. How old am I now. How are you now Celeste. How old are you now.

SCENE 6 **WOODS**

(MARCH IS AHEAD OF CELESTE, WALKING FASTER)

1 CELESTE Are you serious?

(CELESTE STOPS WALKING)

March.
How is this gonna help us find him?

2 MARCH Trust me.

3 CELESTE I'VE TRUSTED YOU FOR HALF AN HOUR. WHY ARE
WE STILL GOING BACKWARDS?

(MARCH STOPS WALKING)

4 MARCH Do you want to find him or not?

5 CELESTE Yes. But if we keep going in the wrong direction, by the
time we find him he's gonna be dead.

Do you even know where this pond is?

6 MARCH ...

(MARCH BEGINS TO WALK AGAIN. CELESTE
FOLLOWS BEHIND)

7 CELESTE MARCH. DO YOU KNOW WHERE THIS POND IS?

Is this you trying to get back at me for not inviting you?

(MARCH STOPS AGAIN. SO DOES CELESTE)

8 MARCH Do you ever take a day off thinking you're the centre of the universe?

I don't have to help you, you know. Just call the police.

9 CELESTE I can't. My mum's gonna flip.

10 MARCH So, follow me or find him yourself.

11 CELESTE You can keep going wherever the fuck you're going. I've got maps on my phone.

12 MARCH Good luck getting reception mate.

(MARCH CONTINUES TO WALK. CELESTE DOESN'T)

FX MOBILE PHONE KEYPAD.

(PAUSE)

13 CELESTE. (TO SELF) What the hell?

FX MOBILE PHONE KEYPAD.

14 CELESTE It was here before.
Where's...

(CELESTE BEGINS TO PURSUE MARCH, CALLING AFTER HER:)

March! How come the pond's not on maps anymore?!

15 MARCH (CALLING BACKWARDS) Good luck.

16 CELESTE March!

17 MARCH Like I said. It's lost.

18 CELESTE I'm being fucking serious, March. I need to find him.

19 MARCH It moves.
The pond moves every equinox twice a year
It's never in just one place, so we have to look for it

20 CELESTE What?

21 MARCH The forest rearranges itself. That's why I'm going back.

22 CELESTE March.

How can it move? How can it be in two places at once?

(MARCH KEEPS WALKING)

HOW DOES THAT MAKE SENSE?

23 MARCH HOW COME YOU THOUGHT I WAS YOUR GRANDAD?

24 CELESTE Because it's dark.

25 MARCH No.
Because it's the equinox.
It warps things till they don't make sense.

(MARCH SLOWS DOWN AND HALTS BY A TREE)

Here. This is where I lost my place.

SCENE 7

VOICE NOTE

(AN ACCIDENTAL POCKET RECRDING OF SOMEONE
WALKING THROUGH THE WOODS)

SCENE 8 **WOODS**

FX **TORRENTIAL RAIN.**

1 CELESTE MARCH

MARCH.

I CAN'T SEE YOU.

CAN YOU HEAR ME?

MARCH.

SCENE 9 **CAVE****FX** **HEAVY RAIN.**
PHONE RINGS.

- | | | |
|----|---------|--|
| 1 | MARCH | You should answer it. This is the only place you're gonna get reception. |
| 2 | CELESTE | We can't stay. |
| 3 | MARCH | Well we can't go back out there yet. |
| 4 | CELESTE | I've got thirty missed calls from my mum.
We can't stay here. |
| 5 | MARCH | We have to wait for the rain. |
| 6 | CELESTE | Does it look to you like it's gonna stop anytime soon? |
| 7 | MARCH | We can't do anything about that. We're not going out there. It's dangerous. |
| 8 | CELESTE | I'm telling you I've got thirty missed calls from my mum. |
| 9 | MARCH | Answer the phone then. |
| 10 | CELESTE | It's two hours past when I said I'd be back and I've lost my grandad in a forest on his own.
We need to move. |
| 11 | MARCH | We need to stay and wait it out. That's the only way we're gonna find the pond. |
| 12 | CELESTE | HOW ARE WE GONNA FIND IT IF WE'RE SAT IN |

HERE?

Oh wait, the forest gonna rearrange itself and bring the pond to us.

13 MARCH I'm trying to help you.

14 CELESTE We need to find him and call the care home before they realise he's gone and report him missing.

Right now, I can still handle this. If we don't find him soon, I won't be able to.

15 MARCH Do you want to find the pond?

16 CELESTE This is actually nuts.
This is nuts.

17 MARCH We can't see or hear through the rain, we're just gonna lose the way again.

18 CELESTE The way that you don't even know?

19 MARCH I've done this before.

20 CELESTE Were you responsible for a missing person?

21 MARCH. ...

22 CELESTE So, this is fucking different then isn't it?

You don't know how to get there any more than I do. I'm going.

23 MARCH As long as we're in this forest, the first rain of spring on

the equinox is heavy enough to drown in. People have died.

It gets heavier every year because the planet's out of whack and I read a prediction that it's gonna happen again in summer—

24 CELESTE

STOP CHATTING SHIT, MARCH.

Do you use your brain to think or just some crappy crystal ball?!

(BEAT)

Even if you're not chatting shit, if he's out there in this 'magical' rain, then he's gonna die.

If Lee dies tonight, my mum is going to hate me. Actually hate me. This was my only responsibility. The only thing she's ever wanted me to do and I've fucked it. Do you understand?

You've got your perfect family that takes care of you no matter what and lets you live in your weird fantasies, but I only have my mum. And she probably cares more about him than she does about me.

25 MARCH

She doesn't.

26 CELESTE

You don't know her.

(BEAT)

FX **PHONE RINGS.**

27 CELESTE

Great. It's the care home. They know he's gone.

28 MARCH

I'm telling you, Celeste. There's nothing we can do except wait.

SCENE 10

VOICE NOTE

1 OLD MAN (WALKING, LOST, DISORIENTED, DAZED – ANOTHER ACCINDETAL RECORDING)
She's just a little girl, it's her birthday, can't you just say
hello, she ain't done anything wrong
she's just a little girl, it's her birthday, can't you just say
hello, she ain't done anything wrong
she's just a little girl, it's her birthday...

SCENE 11 **WOODS**

1 MARCH Oh my god.

2 CELESTE This is it?

3 MARCH No.

4 CELESTE You said this was where it was going to be.

5 MARCH Supposed to be.
Maybe he's been here.

6 CELESTE This is a massive ditch
Full of trash.

7 MARCH Yeah.

8 CELESTE This is not a pond.

9 MARCH I can see that.

10 CELESTE So, where is he?

(MARCH CLIMBS ON TOP OF THE TRASH HEAP)

11 MARCH It's supposed to be here.

12 CELESTE So, your tree marks and your forest sounds are bullshit?
They got us nowhere. This is great.

13 MARCH Why would it bring me here?

14 CELESTE They've probably got a search party out and we're still

nowhere near finding him.

15 MARCH Who would do this?

16 CELESTE Are you listening?

(MARCH THROWS THINGS OFF THE JUNK HEAP AS SHE SPEAKS)

17 MARCH Why do people only have the capacity to care about what
they fucking live through
Can't people find a drop of empathy

(MARCH CONTINUES TO FUSS OVER THE JUNK)

(CELESTE WATCHES MARCH IN SILENCE)

FX MOBILE PHONE NOTIFICATION.

18 OLD MAN (VOICE NOTE: CONFUSED, FUSSING OVER A PILE
OF JUNK)
I'm just a little girl... it's my birthday... can't you just say
hello... I ain't done anything wrong.... it's my birthday... I
ain't done anything wrong.

(CELESTE REPLAYS THE VOICE NOTE AND IS
TRANSPORTED INTO A MEMORY)

She's just a little girl... it's her birthday... can't you just
say hello... She ain't done anything wrong.... it's her
birthday... she ain't done anything wrong.

19 CELESTE He's been here.

(PAUSE. CELESTE TURNS TO LEAVE)

(MARCH STOPS WHAT SHE'S DOING)

20 MARCH Where are you going?

21 CELESTE. Back.

22 MARCH What about Lee?

23 CELESTE If he's not dead someone else will find him.

24 MARCH We can still find him before the morning.

25 CELESTE I don't care about finding him anymore.

26 MARCH What?

27 CELESTE I just remembered something. I don't think he'd care if I was the one lost out here. Even if he wasn't losing his mind.

28 MARCH Look, I promise we can still find the water. Just give me some time to...

(MARCH CONTINUES TO FUSS OVER THE JUNK PILE)

29 CELESTE You know, the first time I met him was on our eighth birthday? That one year me and you were supposed to have a joint swimming party, but we didn't cos my mum took me away?

(MARCH STOPS AND LISTENS TO CELESTE)

We went to visit him at his house. I'd never been before. My mum had to leave me outside sitting on the wall of his front garden cos he didn't wanna see me. Didn't want my mum to bring me inside his house. So, for the whole time they were talking, the whole time they were inside shouting, I could hear it through the window. Mum saying 'she's just a little girl, it's her birthday' and he didn't budge.

- 30 MARCH Stay. We're the only ones that can find him tonight. If there's a search party, they won't find him.
- 31 CELESTE They'll figure it out.
- 32 MARCH They won't be able to. Because of the equinox. Only we can. They won't find him.
- 33 CELESTE You're seriously not done with this equinox shit?
- 34 MARCH Don't you care about this?
- 35 CELESTE What? Lee or the junk heap?
- I'm going.
- 36 MARCH I've been helping you all night. Now it's time to help me instead of thinking about your own problems for a second, you're gonna leave.
- 37 CELESTE A trash heap isn't the same as a missing man.
- 38 MARCH Everything is the same.

Your grandad dumped you and your mum when you were little. You dumped him and let him go missing in the forest. You're gonna ignore this mess and just go back. People only care about what they're living through and you all just leave your shit so you don't have to live through it.

You forget that it's gonna come back around and the universe is gonna force you to live through all the shit you try to dump.

39 CELESTE

Whatever. See you on Monday, March.

(CELESTE WALKS AWAY)

SCENE 12 **WOODS**

FX **FOOTSTEPS SLOWLY WALK THROUGH WOODS.**

(VOICE NOTE PLAYS:)

1 OLD MAN I'm just a little girl... it's my birthday... can't you just say hello... I ain't done anything wrong.... it's my birthday... I ain't done anything wrong.

FX **MOBILE PHONE LOW BATTERY TONE.**

2 CELESTE Great.

(CELESTE CONTIUES TO WALK)

FX **RUNNING FOOTSTEPS APPROACH.**

(CELESTE SEES THAT IT IS MARCH)

3 MARCH Celeste.

(MARCH REACHES CELESTE)

4 CELESTE You looked like an old man from far away.

5 MARCH I'm sorry for saying you and your mum were shit that your grandad dumped.

6 CELESTE Doesn't matter. It's true. I just wish he'd remember the shit he dumped and be sorry for it.

(BEAT)

- 7 MARCH Cel, I know you think I'm mad, but this is important to me.
- 8 CELESTE I'll help you clear it up.
- 9 MARCH Thank you.

SCENE 13 **WOODS, POND**

FX **POND SOUNDS – CRICKETS, FROGS, SOFT WATER.**
SOMEONE SWIMMING.

(THEY WATCH THE SWIMMER)

1 MARCH Oh my god.

2 CELESTE This is it?

3 MARCH Yes.

4 CELESTE How did it change when—

5 MARCH I told you tonight is always weird.

6 CELESTE It's where you said it was gonna be.

(BEAT)

7 MARCH Is that him swimming?

8 CELESTE Maybe.
From far away he kinda looks like me.

END.

Summer '23.

Eoin McAndrew

Characters.

Yasmin (17)

Aidan (17)

Notes.

Dialogue in (brackets) means it's whispered or an aside or thrown away a bit.

/ means that the next line interrupts.

// means that the recording cuts, interrupting the sentence.

The prologue and epilogue are both recorded with binaural sound.

The main body of the play is in stereo.

Sound of heavy rainfall.

Someone breathing.

She sniffs.

She puts on her headphones.

*She rewinds a tape, we hear snatches of audio as she rewinds, like on an old
iPod shuffle.*

She reaches the beginning.

Everything cuts out.

Then:

JULY 2nd. RECORDING 468.

An empty café. The sound of heavy rain outside.

The door opens and someone comes in, soaking from the rain.

AIDAN God, it's really raining out there.

YASMIN Morning.

AIDAN It must be like some kind of record. (A rain record? I don't know.)

YASMIN Yeah. Um. Good morning Aidan.

AIDAN Morning. Hi.

What?

YASMIN Aidan could you come and look at the coffee machine please?

AIDAN Okay sure.

-

What am I looking at?

YASMIN Okay. Well um last night I asked you to clean the coffee machine before you left and locked up.

AIDAN Uh-huh.

YASMIN And. Well. It's not a huge deal but it doesn't look massively clean to me.

AIDAN It's just that it was already / pretty clean when I -

YASMIN But like it's fine. It's just when I ask / you to do something...

AIDAN No, I'll do another clean of it.

YASMIN And like, I don't mind. But if Rory comes in and sees it like that then -

AIDAN No, of course.

 I just - I thought it wouldn't be a big deal because, like.

YASMIN What?

AIDAN Well. It's not like we have any customers at the moment.

 I mean, who's gonna come to a café in the middle of the park when it's raining like this?

YASMIN But what about when the rain stops?

AIDAN Does it look like it's gonna stop any time soon?

YASMIN Aidan can you just clean the coffee / machine? We don't have to make it a thing.

AIDAN I'm cleaning I'm cleaning.

YASMIN And make sure to leave the nozzles in soda water

AIDAN I got it. I got it. I'll put the nozzles in the //

JULY 7th. RECORDING 470.

Still raining.

AIDAN is banging out a rhythm on the counter. It's pretty annoying.

YASMIN Do you - sorry - do you have to do that?

AIDAN Hmm? Oh. Sorry.

YASMIN That's alright.

AIDAN I have ADHD.

YASMIN Do you actually?

AIDAN I dunno. Probably. (I'm so bored.)

YASMIN You can put the news on if you want.

AIDAN I don't really listen to the news. I feel like, you know, cause the news is always bad at the moment, and if it's actually gonna effect me, then I'll find out soon enough. You know?

YASMIN That's certainly a way of thinking.

AIDAN What are you reading?

YASMIN A book.

AIDAN What's the book about?

YASMIN *(sigh)*
It's about a robot who has to mine for coal on an alien planet but problems in his code mean he keeps hearing old transmissions from the ghosts of dead astronauts.

AIDAN I don't really know what to do with that.
Can I put some music on?

YASMIN Rory doesn't like it when we play music in the café.

AIDAN Right well, I'll just sit here in silence then.

YASMIN If you're capable of that, then that would be great.

JULY 12th. RECORDING 472.

Still raining.

YASMIN is on the phone.

AIDAN Would you rather be a goat...? Or a... rabbit? Yeah. Yasmin. Yasmin. Yasmin, Would you rather be a goat or a rabbit?

YASMIN Yeah. Uh-huh.

AIDAN No, that's too easy. Goat obviously. (Goats are great.)

YASMIN Can you shut up? I'm on the phone!

AIDAN Shit, sorry, I didn't see that you were / on the phone.

YASMIN Sorry Rory, what was that?

AIDAN (I thought you were just touching your face.)

YASMIN Sorry, Rory, one second, can I just -

Can you shut up? Can you do that? I'm trying to speak to Rory! And get down off the counter, people eat off that!

AIDAN Who does?? We haven't had a customer in one two three four five six seven eight
NINE DAYS!!

YASMIN Okay, thanks Rory.

So Rory, - just double checking - it's just that, it's now been over a week since we've had a customer in. And the rain is actually getting quite bad, so I just wanted to know if there isn't -

Uh-huh. Of course.

Will do Rory. Bye. Thanks. Bye bye.

AIDAN What did Rory say?

YASMIN He said he's flying home from Greece early because his house is flooded. Water's got into his basement and it's flooded and that's bad because that's where he keeps his collection of electric guitars.

AIDAN God, I hate it when that happens.

YASMIN So I told him that we hadn't had any customers in a while -

AIDAN Yeah?

YASMIN And he said to just stay open and continue as normal.

AIDAN Fuck.

YASMIN He says it's just weather. And it'll stop soon.

Rain outside gets heavy.

JULY 15th. RECORDING 475.

Still raining.

AIDAN yells from the back room.

AIDAN Yaz! Um... Could you come in here a sec?

YASMIN What is it?

YASMIN goes into the back room. It's flooded.

They have to wade around in the water.

YASMIN Oh shit. Oh shit.

AIDAN Okay so yeah I think there's been some minor flooding.

YASMIN Fuck. Okay. Okay. I should call Rory. Right?

AIDAN Yeah?

YASMIN Should I call Rory? I should. I mean this is a lot of water.

AIDAN More water than you'd want. Definitely.

YASMIN The back room's completely flooded.

AIDAN Am I gonna get in trouble for this?

YASMIN Let's get buckets!

AIDAN What?

YASMIN I'll grab some buckets and we'll bail the water out. Like on a sinking ship!

Wait here.

AIDAN Ugh, fine.

YASMIN leaves and comes back, with buckets.

YASMIN What are you doing?

AIDAN I'm taking my shirt off.

YASMIN Is that necessary?

AIDAN I don't wanna get it wet!

YASMIN Take a bucket. Help me bail!

AIDAN Im bailing! I'm bailing! Wait -

Yas! Something's gonna fall out of your pocket!

YASMIN What?

AIDAN Your - that thing is gonna fall-- Catch it! Catch it!

The recorder falls from YASMIN's pocket, into the water.

We hear it as it is completely submerged.

We hear their voices, muffled:

YASMIN Get it! Get it!

AIDAN I'm trying to-

The recorder glitches and breaks.

Cut to silence.

Then:

Another glitch.

Muffled voices through the water clogged speakers of the recorder.

Someone taps it.

AIDAN Is it broken?

YASMIN I don't think so.

Taps it again.

The sound clears. They sound normal again.

AIDAN Put it in rice. I did that when I dropped my phone in the canal.

YASMIN Have you ever had an unexpressed thought?

AIDAN Why do you carry around a voice recorder?

YASMIN It doesn't matter. I think it's working now.

AIDAN -

Do you always carry round a tape recorder?

YASMIN No. Well. Sometimes.

AIDAN That's pretty weird.

YASMIN Forget about it. And put your shirt back on!

AIDAN Fine, Jesus.

I didn't mean weird in a bad way.

Wait did you just leave it on when you put it in your pocket?

YASMIN No.

AIDAN You did! Are you recording this now?

YASMIN No! Shut up!

AIDAN You're wearing a wire! Like an undercover cop! Or a pervert!

YASMIN Shut up, okay?

AIDAN Oh come on! Why are you getting mad? / I was just saying that it's kinda weird that -

YASMIN Look fine! I'm turning it off, see? I'm turning it — //

Silence.

JULY 16th. RECORDING 476.

Still raining.

AIDAN Hey.

YASMIN What?

AIDAN I'm sorry I made fun of your recorder the other day. I didn't mean to upset you.

YASMIN You didn't.

AIDAN Okay.

YASMIN -

But thank you.

AIDAN Can I ask you something?

YASMIN Is it about the recorder?

AIDAN Kind of.

YASMIN -

Fine.

AIDAN What's with the recorder?

YASMIN Ugh.

AIDAN And you don't have to / tell me. I just was wondering.

YASMIN There's nothing to say. There's no big -

AIDAN Forget it. Doesn't matter.

I'm sorry I asked.

-

I do really want to know though.

YASMIN Well I don't have to explain / myself to

AIDAN Fine! Sorry. I don't need to know. I respect your privacy.

To record me.

Without my knowledge or consent.

YASMIN -

You cannot tell anyone this, alright?

AIDAN Who am I gonna tell?

YASMIN Okay.

-

I want to be a writer.

AIDAN And?

YASMIN And I read this interview with this writer I like and she said that when she was writing her first novel, she'd carry around a tape recorder all day and secretly record all of her conversations and then listen to them back later, so that she could capture how *real people* speak.

That's it.

AIDAN (*genuinely unfazed*) Okay.

YASMIN So it's not weird. It's an art thing.

AIDAN I don't think it's weird. Makes sense to me.

Cool that you're gonna be a writer. You seem like you'd be good at that.

You're smart and you're reading like all the time.

YASMIN Thanks.

AIDAN Wait. How do 'real people' speak then?

YASMIN Just... differently. They say 'uh' and 'like' a lot.

AIDAN Couldn't you just write normal dialogue and then add in lots of 'uh's and 'like's?

YASMIN No.

It doesn't work like that.

AIDAN Then how does it work?

JULY 18th. RECORDING 477.

Still raining.

AIDAN So I've been thinking. And if you want to interview me, for your recordings, you can.
I wouldn't mind.

YASMIN I don't interview people. I'm not a journalist.

AIDAN Then what do you do?

YASMIN If someone says something really interesting, or noteworthy, or if I have a really good conversation, I'll go home and write it in my notebook. Exactly as they said it with all the 'um's and 'ah's and pauses and whatever.

AIDAN Have I ever said anything interesting or noteworthy?

YASMIN No but if you do I'll let you know.

AIDAN I'm gonna think about that a lot.

I'm gonna go home and try and think of interesting things to say.

YASMIN You do that.

AIDAN -

Did you know that giraffes drink each other's piss? As part of their mating rituals they hit each other with their necks until one of them pees and then — //

JULY 24th. RECORDING 480.

Still raining.

AIDAN Oh my god. I can't believe I made the notebook!

YASMIN You did.

AIDAN This is so weird.

YASMIN It's not weird.

AIDAN It's so good. I meant good.

YASMIN Here's what I wrote:

July 22th:

(without expression) Aidan: Yas. Yasmin. Would you rather be like. Pause. A. Pause. A Pelican. But like, no-one likes you or wants to talk to you.

Pause.

Yasmin: Or?

Aidan: Or. Like. A tarantula. But like everyone loves you and wants to hang out with you. Pelican or tarantula?

AIDAN That was a good one.

YASMIN Yasmin: I don't know. A tarantula that everyone loves probably.

Aidan: No you wouldn't! Fuck off! A tarantula really? Like that's mad!

AIDAN I don't think I say 'like' that much.

YASMIN You do. I have it on tape.

AIDAN I can't believe of like all the interesting things I say, that's the one you like write down.

YASMIN 'Like'.

AIDAN Shut up.

YASMIN I can't believe you like / totally like wrote that like down like

AIDAN I don't sound like that! I don't sound like -//

JULY 25th. RECORDING 482.

Still raining.

AIDAN What do you write about?

YASMIN Um. Just like. D'you know science fiction? That kind of thing. D'you like sci fi?

AIDAN No, but then again I'm quite cool.

YASMIN Alright.

AIDAN What like Star Trek?

YASMIN Kind of.

AIDAN Are you like really into Star Trek?

YASMIN Not 'really into it'.

AIDAN -

You love Star Trek don't you?

YASMIN Okay so I genuinely think it's the most important TV show of the 20th century.

AIDAN You nerd!

YASMIN But only TOS. And TNG. And some of DS9. And only the even numbered films and absolutely nothing in the Kelvin timeline. Or Enterprise.

AIDAN None of that means anything to me.

Don't look at me like that. I'm not gonna watch it.

JULY 31st. RECORDING 485.

Still raining.

- AIDAN Explain it to me again.
- YASMIN Starfleet, as a rule, just can't interfere with the natural development of alien civilisations.
- AIDAN Okay so I get that, but what if the alien civilisation is gonna do something really stupid?
- YASMIN Not even then.
- AIDAN What if they're gonna like, invent cancer? Or blow up the planet?
- YASMIN D'you want another coffee?
- AIDAN I'd love one.
- YASMIN The Prime directive says that you can't interfere. People have to be free to make their own mistakes. Even if people don't always know what's best for them.

AUGUST 3rd. RECORDING 487.

Still raining.

- YASMIN It's still raining.
- AIDAN Yep.
- YASMIN Does that not scare you?
- AIDAN I don't think so. It makes me sad, but it doesn't scare me.

Should it scare me?

YASMIN I dunno.

AIDAN Um.

I got you something.

YASMIN What? Why?

AIDAN I don't know. I just did. Open it.

YASMIN unwraps a present.

YASMIN Oh.

AIDAN Uh yeah. It's like a... novelisation of one of the original series episodes. It's supposed to be good and I thought it might be helpful for a writer to...

YASMIN No, it's... That's really really nice. Thank you.

AIDAN Sorry it's a bit damp. I had to carry it here and the rain...

D'you have that one already?

YASMIN Um.

AIDAN Ha!

YASMIN I already have one but now I have two! Just in case!

AIDAN Just in case.

What? What's that? Why are you looking at me like-

YASMIN Nothing. No reason.

AUGUST 7th. RECORDING 490.

Still raining.

They're outside, leaving work.

AIDAN locks up.

AIDAN Right, it's all locked up.

YASMIN Oh my god the rain.

AIDAN Okay, I'm gonna make a run to the bus.

YASMIN No, you can't go out in that. Walk with me as far as the station. You don't have an umbrella.

AIDAN Fine. Fuck it's raining.

YASMIN Ready to run?

AIDAN Yes. No wait wait wait. Okay go!

They run through the rain, splashing in puddles.

We can hear the heavy rain bouncing off the umbrella.

They laugh as they run.

Maybe some music underneath.

AUGUST 8th. RECORDING 491.

Still raining.

Heavier than before.

AIDAN When did we last have a customer?

YASMIN I think it was June.

AIDAN It feels like the rain's louder than before.

YASMIN It's getting worse.
Have you been seeing all this stuff that's happening?

AIDAN Uh, I don't really keep up with the news.

YASMIN Yeah you said.

AIDAN Is it bad?

YASMIN Ugh. I'm gonna put on some music.

AIDAN I thought Rory didn't like music in the caf.

YASMIN Well he's not here and I am and I am so fucking sick of the sound of rain so...

She plays with the radio.

A snippet of news as she cycles through stations.

She sets the recorder down.

RADIO ... on this, the forty-first consecutive day of rainfall...
'... mushrooms we see growing on the forest floor, on the sides of trees, out of a fallen branch are merely the visible fruiting bodies of a much larger organism...'¹
... unprecedented flooding throughout...

She finds music.

YASMIN pushes chairs and tables out of the way, clearing some space.

AIDAN What are you doing?

YASMIN I'm clearing some space. D'you dance?

AIDAN I don't really know how to dance.

YASMIN Me neither. We'll have to work something out.

¹ Extract from the Stockholm Lecture recording from Land Skeins: Autumn

AIDAN Alright.

They dance. They laugh, cause maybe they're not very good at it.

The music is fun and they dance, kinda nervously at first, then they get really into it.

Ad libbed dialogue as they work out how to dance.

AIDAN Are you still recording?

YASMIN Oh yeah.

Should I maybe turn off the -?

AIDAN Only if you -

YASMIN Yeah I might just...

YASMIN walks over and turns off the recorder.

AUGUST 12th. RECORDING 493.

Still raining.

AIDAN I loved it. Genuinely.

I thought the robot was great, she was really funny and then - is that a metaphor? I normally hate metaphors because they're stupid and I don't get them but I thought this was -

And you're right! You have to add in the likes and the ums and the pauses, because in real life, that's how people speak when they actually mean stuff.

YASMIN I'm glad you liked it.

AIDAN And this bit - let me find it. Buhbuhbuh... 'she felt sad because the world was actually very beautiful, and she just wished she hadn't come in near the end of it.'

That's, I mean, that's just such a fuckin'... sentence. You know?

YASMIN Thanks for reading it.

AIDAN You alright?

YASMIN Yeah um.

AIDAN What is it?

YASMIN I'm quitting.

AIDAN What?

YASMIN So. Because of the rain and everything that's going on.

My parents are gonna go stay with our aunt and uncle in the country. And I have to go with them.

AIDAN For how long?

YASMIN A couple months. Until everything goes back to normal, I guess. Mum and Dad just panic and they *can* leave / so I guess

AIDAN Have you already talked to Rory?

YASMIN Yeah.

AIDAN Oh.

So when are you?

YASMIN Start of next week.

AIDAN Cool. That's. Yeah.

YASMIN -

You okay?

AIDAN All good. Why?

AUGUST 14th. RECORDING 494.

Still raining.

YASMIN Can I say something?

AIDAN Go ahead.

YASMIN / Okay I was gonna say -

AIDAN / I felt like you were -

They both go to speak at the same time.

AIDAN Sorry you go

YASMIN No, you go

AIDAN / Like I was saying -

YASMIN / But I just wanna say -

They both go to speak at the same time again.

AIDAN Shit sorry, you go.

YASMIN It kind of just seems like you might be a bit annoyed with me. For leaving.

AIDAN No, I'm not annoyed.

YASMIN Because we can still message.

AIDAN Of course.

YASMIN Or you could come visit?

AIDAN I'm gonna make a coffee, you want a coffee?

YASMIN I think it just makes sense, given what's going on. You should maybe talk to your family about leaving for a while.

AIDAN Well my family don't have a house in the country we can go to.

YASMIN What does that mean?

AIDAN Nothing, it's just a fact. I'm gonna make a coffee.

He turns on the coffee machine - it's super loud.

YASMIN D'you want to say something to me?

AIDAN Sorry you'll have to speak up.

YASMIN Do you absolutely have to have a coffee right this second?

AIDAN I can't hear you you'll have to-

YASMIN Oh for fucks sake.

AIDAN What? I gotta get my coffee I just. I'm low on caffeine and its addictive you know //

AUGUST 20th. RECORDING 499.

Still raining.

AIDAN So. Last day.

YASMIN Yeah.

AIDAN You got everything.

YASMIN Think so. Just gonna lock up out back.

YASMIN leaves. The recorder is on the table.

AIDAN Hey you've left your recorder in here!

YASMIN I'll get it in a sec!

Pause.

AIDAN picks it up and speaks directly into the recorder, quietly.

AIDAN Um.

Hey Yas.

It's me. Aidan. From work.

Listen, I know you don't like people speaking directly into the recorder but. Um.

I just wanted to leave you a message so you might listen to it later and, well... I don't know.

You are...

I am...

-

It was really nice working with you. And getting to know you. And I don't think you believed me but I liked your story a lot. I really honestly genuinely did. You're gonna be like. A writer. You just are.

And I'm sorry I've been a dick the last few days. I-

So the thing is I'll probably see you again and I'll be so embarrassed by this message but you don't always know what's gonna happen right? And if we do see each other in the future, it just might not be the same.

You know, it might not be.

This.

So I wanted to -

YASMIN comes back in.

YASMIN Alright, I'm ready.

AIDAN Here's your recorder.

YASMIN Thanks.

They go outside. It's still raining. Heavily.

They're under her umbrella.

She locks up.

AIDAN Right then.

YASMIN Um. I wrote you a list of books.

AIDAN Oh what?

YASMIN Cause you liked Brave New World so much, I just wrote down a few books I thought you might like.

AIDAN This is amazing. Thank you.

You know I never really read that much before you started lending me books.

YASMIN Yeah I could tell.

AIDAN *(laughs)*

YASMIN Read a few of these. I really think you'll like them.

AIDAN Have a great time up north.

YASMIN Thanks. I hope the person who takes my job is more fun.

AIDAN No, you were... Yeah.

They hug.

AIDAN Right. I should head.

YASMIN You're gonna get wet.

AIDAN These things happen. Bye now.

YASMIN Bye you.

He runs out into the rain.

Over the next bit, he voice gets increasingly distant as he walks away.

YASMIN Are you sure you don't want the umbrella?

AIDAN It's just rain! I'm good!

YASMIN And Dune! I didn't put it on the list, but you should read Dune!

AIDAN I'll read everything on the list! I promise!

YASMIN You'll like it!

AIDAN Bye you!

YASMIN Bye!

He's walked off into the rain.

YASMIN stands under her umbrella.

She breathes.

She reaches into her pocket.

Turns off the recorder.

END OF RECORDING.

The sound of heavy rainfall.

YASMIN breathes.

Pause.

She rewinds the on the recorder, presses play:

AIDAN - honestly genuinely did. You're gonna be like. A writer. You just are.

And I'm -

She rewinds a bit more. Presses play:

YASMIN I can't believe you like / totally like wrote that like down like

AIDAN I don't sound like that! I don't sound like -

Too far. She fast forwards a bit.

Presses play:

It's the ad-libbed bits from earlier, as they were dancing and laughing.

The music swells that they dance to swells and continues.

It gets louder and bigger and better and -

End.