

MONIQUE AND ME

by

Jill O'Halloran

CARA, (PRESENT) THIRTIES/ FORTIES, NORTHERN.

MONIQUE, (PRESENT) SIXTIES, RP ACCENT FAINTLY DISTORTED BY THE EFFECTS OF A
RECENT STROKE and (THE EIGHTIES), THIRTIES, RP ACCENT
DEREK, FORTIES.

CHILD CARA. ELEVEN, TWELVE, THIRTEEN, FIFTEEN.

YOUNG GIRL, ELEVEN.

OT, FORTIES

PARAMEDIC, TWENTIES

CARER, FEMALE, THIRTIES

THE NORTH WEST OF ENGLAND

SCENE 1.

***A SMALL COUNCIL HOUSE IN THE MIDDLE OF A SPRAWLING COUNCIL ESTATE, WHERE
MONIQUE LIVES ALONE.***

PRESENT

MONIQUE'S BATHROOM

SFX: SOUND OF SPLASHING WATER IN A BATHTUB

MONIQUE: Don't look at me while you're doing it.

CARA: I'm not looking.

MONIQUE: I can see that you are. I've asked you not to.

CARA: It's hard to do it without looking.

MONIQUE: I don't like you seeing me like this.

CARA: You shouldn't think about it.

MONIQUE: Close your eyes.

CARA: I can't do it with my eyes closed.

MONIQUE: Of course you can.

CARA: If I can see what I am doing, I can get on with it quicker and we'll be finished before you know it.

MONIQUE: Why do you never do what I ask you?

CARA: **(to us) I am bathing my Mum. Neither of us wants to be here.**

CARA: I'll only take a minute.

SFX: MORE SPLASHING WATER

CARA: See.
(beat)
Finished.
(beat)
Shall we get you out?

SFX: CARA LIFTS MONIQUE UNEASILY OUT OF THE BATHTUB.

CARA: There we are.

MONIQUE: I'm cold.

CARA: I'll get you dry and into your clothes as quick as I can.

SFX: SOUND OF CARA USING A TOWEL TO DRY MONIQUE

CARA: **(to us) She used to have a beautiful voice. Clear as cut glass. And she used to be independent.**
(beat)
The stroke changed that.

SCENE 2.

MONIQUE'S LIVING ROOM

SFX: THE TELEVISION IS ON VERY LOW

CARA: Are you warmer now or shall I put the fire on?

MONIQUE: I'll be fine with just a hot drink. I don't want to get too warm.

CARA: **(to us) Anybody will tell you how hard it is to be a carer.**
(beat)
It's exhausting and relentless and sad.

MONIQUE: Cara! Cara!

CARA: *(from the kitchen)* Yes?

MONIQUE: You forgot my drink.

CARA: *(from the kitchen)* I didn't forget. I'm just making it now.

MONIQUE: What are you making?

CARA: *(from the kitchen)* Tea.

MONIQUE: Tea? Oh good. That's what I wanted.

CARA: ***(to us)* And it's so much harder when the person you're caring for is someone you really detest.**

CARA: ***(to us)* When I was a child I hated school lunchtimes. I can't remember a time when I didn't make my own sandwiches to take in. The children around me would open their lunch boxes and inside would be food their parents, their mothers, probably, had prepared for them. It was just cheese...ham sandwiches, chocolate biscuits. But the way their sandwiches had been cut so carefully.**

(beat)

There was this girl who sometimes got a chicken drumstick, and at the end of the bone there was shiny tin foil so her fingers didn't get greasy. I told my Mother about her and she laughed and said 'whoever had the time to do that' and that her mother should get herself a life instead of wasting it on things like that.

(beat)

Now I am older I have to admit my Mother may have had a point.

SFX: SOUND OF CARA ENTERING THE ROOM AND PUTTING DOWN TWO CUPS OF TEA

CARA: The children are coming after school.

CARA: ***(to us)* I have two girls. I love them with every single cell in my body and I could talk about them forever. But this is my story not theirs.
Thank God.**

MONIQUE: Will they be noisy?

CARA: They are children, so yes, they probably will be noisy.

MONIQUE: Can you ask them not to be?

CARA: We won't be much more than an hour before I take them home. Dave has said he'll come over to mine after work. Once I've dropped them off I'll come straight back here to sort out your tea and get you to bed.

MONIQUE: It's very modern.

CARA: What?

MONIQUE: David.

CARA: If a Dad looking after his own children is modern, then yes, it is.

MONIQUE: But you're divorced.

CARA: Separated.

MONIQUE: You won't be too long?

CARA: I've said I'll be as quick as I can.

MONIQUE: You say that.

CARA: (snaps) Yes, I do say that, because I mean it.

CARA: I'm tired...

SCENE 3.

MONIQUE'S FRONT ROOM

SFX: THE TELEVISION IS ON LOW - MONIQUE'S BREATHING IS LOUD AND HEAVY AS SHE SLEEPS

SFX: FRONT DOOR OPENS AND CARA ENTERS THE HOUSE.

CARA: (to us) She's asleep. She looks comfortable...and peaceful. She has aged well. She always says it's the genes. My Mother and I are not at all alike...

SFX: CARA SWITCHES OFF THE TELEVISION SO ALL THAT IS AUDIBLE IS MONIQUE'S BREATHING

CARA: (to us) *She's on the sofa, surrounded by the cushions she's collected over the years. Beautiful and delicate; the cushions, and my Mother. I watch her closely, taking the opportunity to examine the details of her face as she sleeps; feeling her breath on my cheek.*
(beat)
I wonder what would happen if I picked up one of those cushions and pressed it against her face.

SFX: MONIQUE STIRS SOFTLY AND CARA SHIFTS BACK ON THE SOFA

MONIQUE: Hello.

SILENCE

MONIQUE: How long have I been asleep?

CARA: I don't know. I've only just arrived.

MONIQUE: You should have woken me up.

CARA: I didn't like to. You looked comfortable.

MONIQUE: I probably won't sleep tonight.

CARA: Do you need the toilet?

MONIQUE THINKS ABOUT IT.

MONIQUE: Yes please.

SCENE 4.

THE EIGHTIES

CARA AND MONIQUE'S STREET

SFX: SOUNDS OF CHILDREN PLAYING

CARA: *(to us)*. It's the eighties. I'm eleven. Just. I'm outside, on my street.

YOUNG GIRL: Who's that man?

CHILD CARA: Which man?

YOUNG GIRL: Him.

CARA: ***(to us)* He's tall and well dressed and the car he's parked outside our home is sleek and expensive. It's only a few minutes before all of the kids on the street and even a couple of adults are standing around it, gawping....**

VOICE MERGES INTO...

CARA/CHILD CARA: ***(to us)* ...I don't know the man but he's in my house, with my Mother and he's parked his car outside my house so I feel protective when grubby hands start to leave their traces on the polished paintwork.**

CHILD CARA: Hey. Don't be doing that.

YOUNG GIRL: What's it to you?

CHILD CARA: He's come to my house, that's what.

CHILD CARA: *(to us)* Is this him? My father?

SCENE 5.

MONIQUE'S LIVING ROOM

MONIQUE: Here she is. Come in Cara.

DEREK: Hello there.

CHILD CARA: Hello?

MONIQUE: She's shy.

DEREK: Don't know who she gets that from.

MONIQUE LAUGHS

CHILD CARA: **(to us) Is he shy too? Am I like him?**

MONIQUE: This is Derek, Cara.

SILENCE.

MONIQUE: I do my best, to bring her up properly, but she's so influenced by the local children. I worry what she's going to turn out to be.

DEREK: I don't believe any daughter of yours would grow up to be any less lovely than her mother.

MONIQUE: You are such a darling.

 (beat)

 Cara. Come here.

CARA/ CHILD CARA: **(to us) I move closer towards him. Looking for traces of me in his face.**

DEREK: Have you been playing out, Cara?

CARA/CHILD CARA **(to us) I nod. Too afraid to speak.**

MONIQUE: I try to keep her occupied indoors but she does tend to get under the feet.

 It's a nuisance, not knowing what to do for the best.

DEREK: Best place for them. Out there. In the fresh air.

MONIQUE: Of course, You're right.

SILENCE.

MONIQUE: Well do as he says, Cara. Go and play.

DEREK: I hope we meet again, Cara.

CARA: **(to us) I learned later that my mother and Derek had met weeks earlier on a train station platform. The train had been delayed for twenty minutes or so. Derek had offered my mother, who smoked to keep her figure, another cigarette.**

SCENE 6.

PRESENT

MONIQUE'S BATHROOM

SFX: SOUND OF THE TOILET FLUSHING

MONIQUE: Cara!

CARA: (*from downstairs*) I'm coming.

SFX SOUND OF CARA RUNNING UP THE STAIRS AND ENTERING THE BATHROOM

MONIQUE: I can't seem to...I got up, then fell back down onto the toilet again.

CARA: Let me help you.

 (beat)

 Can you shift your weight over to this side?

MONIQUE: I'm sorry about this.

CARA: Let's just concentrate on getting you sorted.

SFX: SOUND OF MONIQUE STRUGGLING TO MOVE

MONIQUE: It's tricky to...

CARA: Can you just hook your arms over mine? Can you manage?

(beat)

That's great Mum.

(beat)

Right. On three. Try to push upwards.

(beat)

One, two, three.

SFX: SOUND OF CARA LIFTING MONIQUE FROM THE TOILET

CARA: There we go.

MONIQUE: I just need to wash my hands.

CARA: I'll help you.

MONIQUE: No. You can wait outside until I'm finished.

CARA: I'm fine here.

MONIQUE: Cara.

CARA: You could fall again.

MONIQUE: Please. I just want a little privacy...

LANDING

SFX: CARA LEAVES THE BATHROOM AND WAITS ON THE LANDING

CARA: I'm waiting right outside the door. On the landing.

SFX: SOUND OF MONIQUE RUNNING THE TAP AND SPLASHING WATER...

SCENE 7.

THE EIGHTIES

MONIQUE'S LIVING ROOM

....SFX: CARA QUICKLY RUNS DOWN THE STAIRS

CHILD CARA: (*coming down the stairs*) I'm ready Mum.

MONIQUE: What do you think you are wearing? Honestly Cara. Derek is very high up in the firm. Do you want to embarrass him turning up looking like some urchin when he has been kind enough to invite us to the barbecue. Go and put on something else.

SFX: DOORBELL RINGS

MONIQUE: And be quick about it. We can't make him late.

CHILD CARA: I don't know what to wear.

MONIQUE: Good grief child....The blue one.

CHILD CARA: It's too small for me.

MONIQUE: Since when?

CHILD CARA: I don't know.

MONIQUE: I'll have to get the door.

MONIQUE'S HALLWAY

SFX: SOUND OF THE FRONT DOOR OPENING

MONIQUE: Hello, Derek.

SFX: SOUND OF DEREK AND MONIQUE EXCHANGING PECKED CHEEKS

DEREK: You look...good enough to eat.

MONIQUE: (coy) Behave...

DEREK: Ready to go?

MONIQUE: In a second. Slight wardrobe issue.

DEREK: You look wonderful.

MONIQUE: Not me, darling. (*Shouts upstairs*) Cara!

DEREK: Is she going to be quick? I know it's just a social thing but I would really prefer it if we weren't late.

MONIQUE: Let me hurry her along.

SFX: SOUND OF MONIQUE GOING UP THE STAIRS

CARA'S BEDROOM

CHILD CARA: I don't know what to wear, Mummy.

MONIQUE: Don't be ridiculous. Derek is waiting.

CHILD CARA: But I don't know which dress/

MONIQUE: /Just put anything on.

DEREK: (*from downstairs*) Are you ready?

SFX: MONIQUE OPENS AND CLOSSES WARDROBE DOORS AND DRAWERS.

MONIQUE: Wear that one. It'll just have to do.

SFX: SOUNDS OF CARA STRUGGLING TO GET INTO A DRESS.

CHILD CARA: It's too small, Mummy.

MONIQUE: You'll have to stay here.

SFX: SOUND OF MONIQUE WALKING DOWN THE STAIRS.

MONIQUE'S HALLWAY

MONIQUE: She's not feeling too well. We'll have to go without her.

DEREK: That's a shame. Are you sure you still want to come?

MONIQUE: Of course! She'll be fine. She's a very sensible girl.

DEREK: Right then.

MONIQUE'S LIVING ROOM

SFX: FRONT DOOR SHUTS. FROM OUTSIDE, DEREK'S CAR SPEEDS AWAY

CHILD CARA: **(to us)** I'm alone. I have no idea what time my mother will be home.

CHILD CARA: **(to us)** I thought I wouldn't like being left at nighttime, in the house, by myself, but I'm not scared.

MONIQUE'S LIVING ROOM

SFX: SOUND OF A TELEVISION BEING SWITCHED ON

CHILD CARA: **(to us)** I can watch what I like.

SFX: RUSTLE OF A CRISP PACKET AND CRISPS BEING EATEN NOISILY.

CHILD CARA : **(to us)** Before long I'm on my second bag of crisps.

SFX: CRISPS CONTINUE TO BE EATEN NOISILY BY CARA.

CHILD CARA: **(to us) I think about eating a third bag, but decide against it.**

 (beat)

 Is this what it feels like to be a grown up?

SCENE 8.

CARA'S BEDROOM

**SFX: SOUND OF A RADIO PLAYING POP MUSIC ON LOW, FROM UNDER THE
BEDCLOTHES.**

CHILD CARA: **(to us) I'm the only one in the house so there's no reason for me to be**

 listening to my music underneath the bedcovers.

 (beat)

 But I do.

SFX: DOWNSTAIRS DOOR OPENING AND SHUTTING

CHILD CARA: **(to us) They're back.**

SFX: SOUND OF THE RADIO BEING SWITCHED OFF, ABRUPTLY

MONIQUE AND DEREK ARE DRUNK AND LOUD. CARA CAN HEAR THEIR CONVERSATION
FROM DOWNSTAIRS.

DEREK: Where do you keep the booze?

MONIQUE: Shush.

DEREK: Is she asleep?

MONIQUE: Probably.

DEREK: Are you going to check her?

MONIQUE: She's fine.

CHILD CARA: (*whispers*) I am fine.

DEREK: You really should check her.

MONIQUE: I told you she's fine.

DEREK: You get the drinks. I'll go up.

SFX: SOUND OF THE CARA'S BEDROOM DOOR BEING OPENED BY DEREK

DEREK: Hello.

CHILD CARA: Hello.

SILENCE

SCENE 9.

PRESENT

MONIQUE'S BEDROOM

SFX: CARA IS PUTTING MONIQUE TO BED. THE OLD BED SQUEAKS A LITTLE AS MONIQUE ADJUSTS HERSELF TO GET INTO A COMFORTABLE POSITION

CARA: Do you want me to put an extra blanket on?

MONIQUE: No thank you.

CARA: OK.
(beat)
Have you got your phone handy?

SFX: SOUND OF MONIQUE SCRABBLING AROUND TO LOCATE HER PHONE, WHICH IS ON A SIDE TABLE.

MONIQUE: It's just here.

CARA: Ring me if there is any problem in the night.

CARA: And please, please promise me you won't try to go downstairs, by yourself?

MONIQUE: I won't.

CARA: **(to us) I think about the times I have guided her slowly and carefully down the stairs. Making sure her feet are steady on the steps. Watching to see that she's holding on tight to the handrail. I have these images of how a push, no, not even a push, a nudge, the slightest of effort, would send her tumbling down.**

CARA: I mean it. The stairs are dangerous on your own.

MONIQUE: Don't keep going on.

CARA: I will keep going on.

MONIQUE: Alright, I promise.

SFX: SOUNDS FROM THE STREET OF LOUD BASS MUSIC. CARA CLOSES THE CURTAINS SHARPLY, WHICH BARELY MAKES A DIFFERENCE TO THE VOLUME OF THE MUSIC.

CARA: It's a miracle anybody can sleep with your neighbours.

SCENE 10.

THE EIGHTIES

MONIQUE'S KITCHEN

SFX: CHILD CARA IS MAKING HER BREAKFAST. THE SOUND OF CEREAL BEING POURED INTO A BOWL.

MONIQUE: Do you mind trying to be quiet? Mummy has a dreadful headache.

SFX: CARA TRIES TO EAT HER CEREAL AS QUIETLY AS SHE POSSIBLY CAN

MONIQUE: What did you do last night?

CHILD CARA: I watched telly.

MONIQUE: You'd have better spent your time doing some homework.

MONIQUE: I know you think I'm hard on you but it's your ticket out of this place, Cara. A good education.

MONIQUE: You'd have liked the barbecue. We had to eat it with our hands, which I wasn't very keen on, but you have to throw yourself into the spirit of these things, if you want to get on.

MONIQUE: Do you like Derek?

SILENCE.

MONIQUE: Well it's early days. You would really like his house. I could see you there. It's big...and it's detached. We had a detached house, when I was growing up. Would you like to see Derek's house Cara?

CHILD CARA: I don't know.

MONIQUE: Derek says the men who work for him....who work for him, their children go to a private school, just like the one my mummy and daddy sent me to. Maybe you'll be able to go to a private school one day. You'd do well there, a clever girl like you.

CHILD CARA: I like my school.

MONIQUE: But you have no idea how much better our lives could be. He's a nice man and you're eleven now. There aren't many men who would give a woman living like this with an eleven year old daughter a second look.

SILENCE.

MONIQUE: I'll take you out soon. I'll buy you a new dress.

SCENE 11.

PRESENT

CARA'S CAR

SFX CARA'S CAR ENGINE RUNNING AS SHE DRIVES ALONG THE ROAD. THE RADIO IS ON LOW

CARA: *(to us)* I'm tired as I drive to her house the following morning. I slept badly... thoughts swirled around my brain while my body fought hard to get to sleep. I tried really hard but it was impossible to let them go. Then, I got caught on the school playground by some mother I don't really know wanting to talk about me volunteering for a stall. For some school thing. I wasn't really listening. I tried to explain I couldn't really talk but...I'm really late now.

MONIQUE'S HOUSE

SFX: CARA LETS HERSELF IN THROUGH THE FRONT DOOR WITH A KEY

CARA: *(shouts)* I got here as quick as I could.

 (beat)

 (shocked) Mum. Are you OK?

SFX: CARA RUSHES OVER TO MONIQUE

CARA: Mum! Can you hear me? Mum?

 (beat)

 Oh God, no.

 (beat)

 I'll get you up.

SFX: CARA TRIES TO MOVE MONIQUE BUT SHE CAN'T MANAGE TO LIFT HER.

CARA: I can't....

 (beat)

 Mum...

SCENE 12.

TRAVELLING AMBULANCE

SFX: AMBULANCE SIRENS

PARAMEDIC: We shouldn't be too long. No more than five minutes by my reckoning.

CARA: You're doing well to get us there so quickly.

PARAMEDIC: That's our job.

CARA SOBS

PARAMEDIC: Don't worry. We'll look after your Mum.

CARA: I told her not to use the stairs. I made her promise that she wouldn't.

PARAMEDIC: It's not your fault.

PARAMEDIC: Do you need to phone anyone? Brothers? Sisters?

CARA: No. There's only me and her.

PARAMEDIC: Same with me and my Mum.

(beat)

I can understand why she means so much to you.

SILENCE.

PARAMEDIC: She must have been a beautiful woman.

CARA: Yes, she was. Very beautiful.

PARAMEDIC: She has a really kind face too.

SILENCE.

SCENE 13.

THE EIGHTIES

MONIQUE'S LIVING ROOM

CHILD CARA: **(to us)** I am twelve now.

VOICE MERGES INTO...

CHILD CARA/CARA: **(to us)** Derek's been with my mother for six, or however many months.

I've lost track because of the blur in my head. He dips in and out,
making promises to my mother he hardly ever keeps.

CHILD CARA: **(to us)** I'm unhappy.

(beat)

I tried to get her to notice.

SFX: MONIQUE KNOCKING AT THE WINDOW.

MONIQUE: Cara.

 (beat)

 In the house now!

SFX: SOUND OF CARA ENTERING THE HOUSE.

MONIQUE: What did you do to Derek's car?

CHILD CARA: Nothing, Mummy.

MONIQUE: I know when you're lying.

CHILD CARA: I didn't do anything.

MONIQUE: There's a great big scratch all along the side of his car.

CARA: So?

MONIQUE: It happened when you were outside.

CHILD CARA: I didn't do it.

SILENCE.

MONIQUE: (softens slightly) Why don't you like him?

 (beat)

 Cara?

 (beat)

 If there's something wrong, tell me.

SILENCE.

MONIQUE: If there is a problem. I want to know.

SILENCE.

CARA: **(to us) I didn't not want to tell her. I just couldn't think of the right words.**

MONIQUE: I know the thought of things changing is frightening but all I want is a better life than this one for me and for you.

CHILD CARA: Can't it just be you and me, Mummy?

MONIQUE: Don't you understand?
(beat)
Derek is a wonderful man. He could change our lives forever.
(beat)
All you have to do is be nice to him.
(beat)
Please.

CHILD CARA: I'll try harder, Mummy.

SCENE 14.

PRESENT

HOSPITAL WARD

OT: Hi there. Are you the daughter?

CARA: Yes. I am.

OT: Hi. I'm Jane Sanford, the Occupational Therapist attached to this ward. I've been called up to have a word if that's OK?

CARA: Yes. Sure.

OT: So she fell?

CARA: Yes.

OT: On the stairs?

CARA: Yes. I'm not sure exactly how many steps she missed but she ended up at the bottom.

OT: You found her?

CARA: Yes. I should've been there earlier...it wouldn't have happened...

OT: She must have given you a scare?

CARA: She did.

OT: So the stroke was...four months ago?

CARA: Yes.

OT: It's good news she hasn't broken anything.

CARA: I know. I was convinced.

OT: So the plan is to discharge her later today.

CARA: Oh.
(beat)
OK.

OT: You thought they'd keep her in?

CARA: I don't know what I thought.

OT: So I just need to know, before she's discharged, what's the plan for her care...at home?

CARA: It's me.
(beat)
There's just me.

OT: Twenty-four hours?

CARA: No, not twenty-four hours, but as much as I can.

OT: You don't live with your Mum?

CARA: No. But I am there a lot.

(beat)

She was very independent before it happened...the stroke I mean. We've never...lived in each other's pockets.

OT: Do you have family?

CARA: Two girls. I'm on my own, but my ex husband is pretty good. Well, really good to be fair.

OT: Work?

CARA: I've been really lucky. They've agreed to a sabbatical.

OT: When your mum became ill?

CARA: Yes.

OT: What did you do?

CARA: Social Worker.

OT: Tough job.

CARA: It is. It was.

OT: So I don't need to give you advice on accessing help...You're well in the know.

CARA: I should be...I know there's things we can do, but she's not keen on anybody but me being there.

OT: So what made you go into social work?

CARA: The old story. I wanted to give something back.

OT: Look. Would it be OK for me to pop 'round some time? Just to talk things through and maybe get things on track?

CARA: Yes. Please. That would be great. Thank you.

SCENE 15.

THE EIGHTIES

MONIQUE'S CAR

SFX: CAR ENGINE

CARA: **(to us) My Mother loved to visit Derek's house. To pretend for a few short hours that she lived there. She was so happy, sitting with him on his plush green sofa, watching her favourite programmes on a television we could only dream of owning. But then, we had to go home. My Mother and I were only ever visitors.**

(beat)

It was always the same in the car on the way home. She was upset at having to leave. I barely said a word. She always had to have some explanation why I didn't speak, or smile. Sometimes she said I must be going through my angry phase. I wasn't angry. Anger is an emotion.

(beat)

I didn't have emotions.

MONIQUE: Things seem to be better between you and Derek.

SILENCE.

MONIQUE: Thank you Cara.

(beat)

 I think it won't be long now, before he asks me a question, and when it's official things everything will be different for us. Like I promised.

SCENE 16.

MONIQUE'S LIVING ROOM

MONIQUE: I was worried they'd keep me in.

CARA: Well you're home now. You can sleep safe and sound in your own bed.

MONIQUE: I can't bear those hospitals.

CARA: I'm staying here with you tonight.

MONIQUE: No, you mustn't.

CARA: I can't leave you like this.

MONIQUE: You're annoyed with me.

CARA: Maybe if you had done as I'd said and stayed in bed you wouldn't have fallen.

MONIQUE: I didn't know where you were.

CARA: You knew I was on my way.

MONIQUE: I just wanted a drink. I was thirsty.

SILENCE

MONIQUE: It would have been easier if they'd kept me in.

CARA: Well they didn't.

MONIQUE: What about the girls?

CARA: Dave's on it. He's there now. It's not a problem for him to stay over.

MONIQUE: I can't expect you stay here. It wouldn't be fair.

CARA: Everything is sorted.

MONIQUE: Well, there's your old room you can sleep in?

CARA: I can sleep on the sofa.

SCENE 17.

THE EIGHTIES

CARA'S BEDROOM

SFX: A TRANSISTOR RADIO PLAYS A POP TRACK FROM THE EIGHTIES. THE SOUND IS MUFFLED AS SHE LISTENS TO IT FROM BENEATH THE BEDCOVERS.

CHILD CARA: **(to us) I am still here, underneath my bedcovers, listening to my radio.
The music, and the way DJs talk in-between distracts me. I'm 13 now.
He's been coming to our house for two years now.**

SILENCE.

CHILD CARA: **(to us) My bed is not a safe place.**

VOICE MERGES INTO...

CHILD CARA/CARA: **(to us) But there was nowhere to hide.**

MONIQUE: I'm a grown woman. I don't need to be told how much I should drink.

DEREK: You do when you drink so much you embarrass me.

CHILD CARA SOFTLY SINGS ALONG TO KATE BUSH 'RUNNING UP THAT HILL' TRYING STUMBLING HERE AND THERE, TRYING NOT TO HEAR THEM FROM DOWNSTAIRS BUT MONIQUE AND DEREK'S VOICES ARE HEARD.

MONIQUE: I didn't embarrass anybody.

DEREK: You most certainly did.

CHILD CARA: (*from underneath the bedclothes, stifled*) They always argue.

MONIQUE: You are so 'buttoned up.'

CHILD CARA tries to keep singing along to KATE BUSH again but gets too upset to continue.

DEREK: I don't expect any friend of mine to behave in public like you just did.

MONIQUE: Friend?

DEREK: Not this again.

CHILD CARA: (*from underneath the bedclothes, stifled*) Tell him to go.

MONIQUE: Yes. This again. And again and again and again until you're straight with me.

DEREK: What the hell do you mean?

MONIQUE: Is this it? Is it just going to be like this forever?

CHILD CARA: (*into her pillow*). Please. Don't let it be like this forever....

SCENE 18.

PRESENT

MONIQUE'S LIVING ROOM

CARA: **(to us) A week or so had passed since her accident. She was getting stronger.**

MONIQUE: The children across the road are a nuisance.

CARA: Are they?

MONIQUE: The worst they've ever had living in that house. If you can believe that.

CARA: Worse than the O'Riordans?

MONIQUE: Maybe not. But bad enough. Kicking a football, making noise for no reason. They just like the sound of their own screeching.

MONIQUE: Mrs. Mahmood brought some food round last night, after you'd gone.

CARA: Did you manage to open the door?

MONIQUE: You gave her a key.

CARA: Oh yes. So I did.

MONIQUE: She was here a while. She sorted out my tablets for me.

CARA: They were all laid out for you ready.

MONIQUE: You know what I mean.

CARA: No. I don't.

MONIQUE: They were on the table and she passed them to me.
(beat)
It was very good of her.

CARA: She's a living saint.

MONIQUE: There's no need for sarcasm.

CARA: Was she here long?

MONIQUE: We watched some television together.

CARA: Well actually, that was nice of her.

CARA: So you were happy for her to sit with you?

MONIQUE: Why wouldn't I be?

CARA: You barely spoke to her for twenty years.

MONIQUE: She's easy company.

CARA: So if you were OK with her, coming in here, sitting with you...helping you/

MONIQUE: /She hardly did that. As you just pointed out.

CARA: Hear me out.

(beat)

Would you think about...help?

SILENCE

CARA: From someone other than me?

SILENCE

CARA: Not all the time, but some of the time.

MONIQUE: No.

CARA: Mum?

MONIQUE: (*sharp*) No Cara.

SILENCE

MONIQUE: She made me something in plastic tubs. Her type of food. I said thank you very much but I haven't looked at it yet.

CARA: Shall I warm it up for your lunch?

MONIQUE: You have it. You can do me some soup.

CARA: She made it for you.

MONIQUE: It'll be very fattening.

CARA: Who cares?

MONIQUE: I care.

CARA: I'll make you some soup.

KITCHEN

SFX: SOUND OF CARA OPENING AND EMPTYING A CAN OF SOUP THEN THE CLICK OF A GAS BURNER IGNITING

SCENE 19.

THE EIGHTIES

CARA'S BEDROOM

CHILD CARA: **(to us) I'm 15 now. We had a talk today at school. We're supposed to start thinking about the jobs we might want to do when we leave school so we can choose the right subjects when we sit our exams. They told us to talk to our parents about it when we get home.**
(beat)
I am in my bed.
(beat)
Underneath the covers.

DEREK: You're like a bloody cracked record, Monique.

MONIQUE: I don't want to hang around forever, waiting for you to make your mind up.

CHILD CARA SINGS 'RUNNING UP THAT HILL', UNACCOMPANIED BY THE RADIO.

DEREK: I don't know what's wrong with you. We're fine. I'm happy. You're happy/

MONIQUE: /I'm not happy Derek/

DEREK: /We go out. We have a nice time.

MONIQUE: I want more than that.

MONIQUE'S LIVING ROOM

DEREK: Why risk spoiling things?

MONIQUE: Oh for God's sake. This really suits you. Picking me up, taking me out, no responsibilities, no strings.

MONIQUE: Why do you bother, Derek?

DEREK: Why do I bother? What sort of a question is that?

MONIQUE: Because I am wondering...should I be worried?

DEREK: Worried? About what?

MONIQUE: I have a teenage daughter.

DEREK: What?

SILENCE

CARA'S BEDROOM

CHILD CARA is still singing but trails off as the conversation between DEREK and MONIQUE develops.

DEREK: If you are saying what I think you are saying, that's a vile thing to suggest, Monique.

SILENCE.

MONIQUE: I shouldn't have said that. I'm sorry.

DEREK: So you should be.

SILENCE.

DEREK: What's the point of carrying on with this, if you could think something
as...terrible as that?

MONIQUE: I don't know what I was thinking.

DEREK: I can't be with someone who doesn't trust me.

MONIQUE: I do trust you.

DEREK: I need to be sure of that.

MONIQUE: I trust you.

SCENE 20.

THE EIGHTIES

MONIQUE & CARA'S KITCHEN

CHILD CARA: **(to us) I'm at that time; leaving my childhood behind but still, a million
miles from being an adult. My arms...my legs move when I want them
to. My mouth speaks when I need it to. I eat when I am hungry. I sleep
when I am tired. But otherwise I feel dead.**

MONIQUE: Cara. Come here.

SFX: CARA MOVES RELUCTANTLY TOWARDS HER MOTHER ACROSS THE HARD KITCHEN FLOOR

MONIQUE: What on earth have you been eating?

CHILD CARA: Nothing.

MONIQUE: Nothing? You can't have eaten nothing. Come closer.

SFX: CARA MOVES CLOSER TOWARDS HER MOTHER ACROSS THE HARD KITCHEN FLOOR

MONIQUE: Oh my dear God. You're....You cannot be. You're fifteen. This can't be happening.(beat)
You're fifteen.

SILENCE.

MONIQUE: Are you going to say anything?

CHILD CARA: I didn't know/

MONIQUE: /You didn't know what? Are you stupid? You have sex. Your monthlies stop. You struggle to do up your skirt. Surely even you could join up the dots, Cara?

CHILD CARA: I didn't realise.

MONIQUE: You're enormous. How did I not notice before today?

(beat)

Who's the boy?

CARA: **(to us) I've never had sex.**

(beat)

With a boy.

CHILD CARA: I haven't/

MONIQUE: /Haven't what? Had sex? So the Holy Ghost came down for a second time
and impregnated you?

(beat)

Who, Cara?

MONIQUE: Who?

CHILD CARA: Nobody.

MONIQUE: Nobody? It can't be nobody.

CHILD CARA: Who do you think?

MONIQUE: How would I know? You never bring anyone home. You hardly ever speak/

CHILD CARA: /Derek.

SILENCE

MONIQUE: Derek?

 (beat)

 My Derek?

CHILD CARA: Your Derek. Darling Derek.

MONIQUE: No.

CHILD CARA: Yes.

MONIQUE: That can't be true.

CHILD CARA: It's true.

SILENCE

MONIQUE: How long?

SILENCE

MONIQUE: How long?

CHILD CARA: Since the beginning.

SILENCE

CHILD CARA: But you knew.

MONIQUE: I had no idea.

CHILD CARA: You had enough of an idea!

SFX: CARA SLAMS THE DOOR AS SHE EXITS

SCENE 21.

PRESENT

MONIQUE'S LIVING ROOM

SFX: SOUNDS OF TEA POT AND CUPS BEING PUT ON A TABLE BY CARA

OT: Thank you.

CARA: You're welcome.

OT: What beautiful cups and saucers.

MONIQUE: Thank you. They're from the charity shop. I spotted them in the window. These days people throw away the good stuff and buy tat to replace it. I may have ended up in a council house, but I was rich growing up so I know quality when I see it.

OT: Well they are very nice.

OT: So how are you both coping with care?

MONIQUE: Cara is looking after me.

OT: And how are you finding things, Cara?

CARA: It's hard.

(beat)

But I'm trying my best.

SCENE 22.

THE EIGHTIES

MONIQUE'S HOUSE. KITCHEN

MONIQUE: I've finished it. You won't see him again.

SILENCE.

MONIQUE: Cara?

CHILD CARA: What do you want me to say?

MONIQUE: I thought you would want to know.

CHILD CARA: It's nothing to do with me.

MONIQUE: If he contacts me...or you, I've said I'll call the Police.

CHILD CARA: And say what?

MONIQUE: I'll tell them what he did.

SILENCE

MONIQUE: Do you know what an abortion is?

SILENCE.

MONIQUE: Surely you do?

CHILD CARA: Yes I know what an abortion is.

MONIQUE: I can arrange it.

CHILD CARA: I don't want to have an abortion.

MONIQUE: Why not?

CHILD CARA: Because I've only just found out I'm having a baby.

MONIQUE: But it's the obvious answer to this. For your own good.

SILENCE.

MONIQUE: Cara. You have to.

SCENE 23.

PRESENT

MONIQUE'S LIVING ROOM

MONIQUE: Yes, I can prepare my own food.

CARA: No, you can't.

MONIQUE: Yes I can.

CARA: Mum.

MONIQUE: I could do it if you weren't here to help me.

CARA: I am here because you can't do it.

OT: We're going 'round in circles again.

CARA: When was the last time you cooked a meal?

(beat)

Hmm?

(beat)

Because I can't remember so I would be amazed if you could.

(beat)

And all this business about not needing help to wash.

OT: We do appreciate that people can tend to overestimate their abilities. It's hard to come to terms with not being able to do these things.

CARA: But she's not overestimating things. She's telling you a story which is so far from the truth/

MONIQUE: /I am being honest.

CARA: No, you're not.

OT: Do you think that respite care is something we could discuss?
(beat)
Monique?

CARA: You can discuss it. Go ahead. But I am telling you she won't let anybody except me look after her.

OT: Monique, can I go through some information about the type of things available, the places you can stay while Cara has a break.
(beat)
Monique?

CARA: I told you. She won't even think about it.

OT: Monique? This situation is very tiring for Cara. A single mother, two children, trying to care full time for you. Can I get you to think about it?

SILENCE

OT: Shall we have a break?

SCENE 24.

PRESENT

SFX THE TELEVISION IS ON LOW - MONIQUE BREATHS LOW AND HEAVY

CARA: (softly) Mum? Mum?

SILENCE

CARA: (to us). She's asleep and out like a lamp by the look of things. The meeting with the Occupational Therapist tired her right out. I'll have to wake her now, brush her teeth, get her onto to the toilet, get her into bed. Then she'll be unsettled and have a bad night.

(beat)

I look at the cushions and the terrible thoughts come into my head.

Again. Pressing them against her face. I sit next to her and watch her breathe.

(beat)

She relies on me to care for her and I cannot be trusted.

(beat)

I want to cry but I don't want to wake her.

(beat)

I'm going to cry.

(beat)

I have these terrible thoughts all the time, but this feels different.

(beat)

It is different because...

(beat)

Because here I am...picking up a cushion...

SFX: CARA LEAVES THE ROOM, QUIETLY.

SFX CARA ENTERS THE KITCHEN

CARA SOBS

SFX: MONIQUE ENTERS THE KITCHEN

MONIQUE: Cara?

CARA: What are you doing here?

MONIQUE: What's the matter?

CARA: I didn't want you to see me.

(beat)

this.

MONIQUE: Why are you sat on the floor?

CARA: I don't know.

SFX: MONIQUE SITS DOWN NEXT TO CARA.

CARA: What are you doing?

MONIQUE: I'm sitting next to you.

CARA: You can't do that.

MONIQUE: I'll manage.

SILENCE

CARA: I don't think I can go on.
(beat)
Looking after you.

MONIQUE: I know how hard it is.
(beat)
You're so tired/

CARA: /It isn't that.
(beat)
I don't trust myself.
(beat)
I'm so...full of anger.
(beat)
Still.

MONIQUE: Can I hold your hand?

MONIQUE: Thank you.

CARA: I wish things had been different for us.
(beat)
I saw him once. At the train station, of all places. Derek. About a year before he died. He didn't see me.

MONIQUE: You never told me that.

CARA: We never had those conversations.
(beat)
Barely ever.

SCENE 25.

THE EIGHTIES

MATERNITY HOSPITAL

SFX A NEWBORN BABY CRIES AND SNUFFLES SOFTLY

MONIQUE: Can I have a look?
(beat)
He's lovely.
(beat)
How was the labour? Your social worker phoned me to tell me it had started.

CHILD CARA: Julie?

MONIQUE: I think it was her.

CHILD CARA: I asked her to.

MONIQUE: I'm glad you did. I wanted to see him, and you.

CHILD CARA: You're my Mum.

(beat)

I don't have another one.

MONIQUE: This takes me back to you and me. This room looks just the same.

(beat)

I was scared stiff.

CHILD CARA: I wasn't scared. Julie was really good...talking me through it.

(beat)

We've talked a lot.

MONIQUE: That's good of her.

CHILD CARA: It's her job.

(beat)

I love him, but I know I can't keep him.

MONIQUE: That's your decision. Not Julie's.

CHILD CARA: I know but they'll help me through it. They can plan it all out, for me, and him.

MONIQUE: Look at his face. He's handsome, considering who his dad is.
(beat)
Have you told them, who the father is?

CHILD CARA: No.

MONIQUE: And they haven't asked?

CHILD CARA: They think it's just some lad.
(beat)
They can organise somewhere for me to live. Once things are sorted with the baby.

SILENCE

MONIQUE: Is that what you want?

CHILD CARA: I don't know.
(beat)
I'd be on my own.

SILENCE

CHILD CARA: He's strong isn't he Mum?

MONIQUE: He is. A proper little man.

SILENCE

CHILD CARA: Who was my dad?

MONIQUE: Why would you bring a thing up like that now?

CHILD CARA: I don't know. Who was he? Please?

MONIQUE: Not now.

CHILD CARA: I want to know.

MONIQUE: Have your moment with your baby, Cara.

(beat)

I promise I will tell you.

(beat)

Just not today.

SCENE 26.

PRESENT

MONIQUE'S KITCHEN

MONIQUE: My father drove me to this house. He didn't even set foot through the door.

(beat)

I don't think my mother ever really knew exactly where I lived.

CARA: You never told me that.

MONIQUE: I remember I was scared, every night by myself.

CARA: You weren't by yourself.

(beat)

You had me.

MONIQUE: A tiny baby who had nothing to do with any of it.

CARA: What happened to you Mum?

CARA: **(to us) I'd had a lifetime of building up stories in my head. What my father looked like, how they'd met. Kid's stuff. He was a boy from the wrong side of the tracks who led my mother astray. A boy who her parents would never approve of. Someone she still dreamt of every night, thinking about how their lives would have been had they'd stayed together. Or maybe he was someone from the boys' school across the town. Clever and handsome, who panicked when my mother fell pregnant. He married a 'suitable' girl but secretly he always loved my mother and wondered what became of their child together. Me. Then I had this other idea; he was the boy paid by the travelling fair to spin my mother around on the fairground ride until she was dizzy. He was handsome and wild and the days he spent in the town before he had to move on were the happiest they'd ever experienced. What they'd felt for each other was real but never meant to last forever. (beat) Whoever he was, I wished that one day he'd come and rescue me. My mother was right. Sitting on the kitchen floor, her holding my hand. I wasn't prepared for the truth.**

MONIQUE:

You know, my parents were from a different world to this one Cara. Our house was lovely...huge, with wisteria covering the whole front. And it was important to be in the loop, to know the right people. So there were parties. Long frocks and heavy perfume, cocktails and the smell of cigar smoke. I thought life would always be like this.

(beat)

Martin and Edna.

(beat)

They had two boys at boarding school. Both clever, both sporty. One, the eldest earmarked, for me.

(beat)

Only Martin had different ideas.

(beat)

It started with a smile. Nothing that anybody who saw it would ever think to worry about. Innocent. He told me everything that I wanted to hear. I was beautiful. He didn't love his wife and she didn't love him.

(beat)

There was a party and a young man...a friend of someone or other from university took an interest in me. We just talked.

(beat)

I knew Martin was looking over, watching us, but I didn't think he would be worried because I wasn't interested in anybody else. Not really.

(beat)

Martin insisted we meet up afterwards and I knew he'd been crying. He cried again, in a way I didn't think men did, and I couldn't do anything to stop him. He said he'd kill himself if I ever left him because his life was pointless if he couldn't have me.

(beat)

I hadn't wanted it to happen. Not then, not that night and not in his car. But it happened... because Martin wanted it to.

(beat)

It.

CARA: You were a child.

MONIQUE: I still don't know how Edna found out that the baby was his. She was always such a quiet woman. I never knew if it was her, or him, or their friends, their sons, who threw the paint over my father's car, who sent the letters, calling me every name you can think of. My parents were ignored. Mother came back from shopping in tears countless times. They gave me a choice. A hard one. And I left. With you.

CARA: You should have told me.

MONIQUE: The only thing I could have done for you was to stop what happened to me happening to you.

(beat)

And I didn't.

CARA: No. You didn't.

(beat)

I thought, for a very long time, I was going to die of pain.

MONIQUE: I am so sorry Cara.

(beat)

I'm so proud of you. How you have chosen to live your life, Cara. I see you, with your children. The love you have for them.

CARA: They're... everything.

 (beat)

 Do you love me?

MONIQUE: Of course I love you.

CARA: You've never told me.

MONIQUE: I love you.

SCENE 27.

PRESENT

THE CARE HOME

RECEPTION AREA

CARER: We recognise what a hard decision it is. To hand over a loved one into our

 care but I can honestly say to you she'll as happy and as safe as she can be

 with us.

CARA: I'm sure that she will.

CARER: She may be a little unsettled in the first few days but that's completely

 normal and we keep a very close eye on them.

CARA: Thank you.

CARER: It's easy to get cold feet in the early days but they always get used to us eventually. It's tempting to think that you have made a mistake but really you haven't.

CARA: I'll try to remember that.

CARER: You must do.
(beat)
Have you seen the room?

CARA: No, I haven't.

CARER: It's one of our nicest.
(beat)
Come on, I'll show you.

MONIQUE'S ROOM

SFX: THE CARER OPENS THE DOOR

CARER: Oh she's here. Asleep. I didn't realise.
(beat)
I could wake her? If that's what you want?

CARA: No. Please don't. Let's leave her.

SILENCE

CARER: You're welcome to wait for her here if you like, in the Visitors Room. We can get you some tea.

CARA: No. I'll get off.
(beat)
Just tell her I was here.

CARER: Of course I will.
(beat)
We'll see you soon.

CARA: Yes. See you soon.

SCENE 28.

THE CARE HOME CAR PARK

SFX: CARA WALKS ACROSS THE CAR PARK TOWARDS HER CAR.

CARA: **(to us): I don't know what will happen now. Whether I'll be here, every day...every other day. If, after a few weeks the gaps between my visits get longer and longer until we are both used to the separation.**
(beat)
And, when we do see each other, I don't know if we'll talk things through. The things that happened to me...to her.

SFX: CARA UNLOCKS HER CAR WITH A BLEEP.

CARA: Or maybe we'll just talk about the weather.

(beat)

I don't know.

(beat)

But I think it'll be better.

SFX: CARA GETS INTO HER CAR AND STARTS THE ENGINE.

SHE STARTS TO SING RUNNING UP THAT HILL AS SHE DRIVES AWAY, AT SPEED