

When the Night has No Right to be King

'The gloomy Hades enriches himself with our sighs and tears'

Sophocles

By John Lynch

Sound of waves of water rushing and heaving like a man in restless sleep. Voices, men thumping at the door of someone's consciousness, with their hard insistent cries. A dog barking, the water the rush of sound in the inner ear.

CHRIS V/O:

I thought that I could find you

There in the half light

In the water

I was sure that I saw you

That I heard you

There amongst the fern

In the bent and twisted light

Moving in the song of your beauty

Crying for the shape of my arms your

Hair a storm of reed and shadow

Your eyes shining with the dreams

That you had promised would be mine

And mine alone. But I was wrong and my heaviness

Is returning, a weight across the frontiers of my heart like an

Army pressing home its advantage, the weight that death claims as its own.

Ext Riverbank

Present time bank of the reservoir voices harsh and insistent begin to sound in his stirring mind, a dog barks, the rush of a world arriving like blister of sound from a fighter jet then silence followed by a piercing hum like the point of sound a television makes when transmission has finished. NB. Harry and Ruth are paramedics

JOSHUA. Chris....Can you hear me?

CHRIS: What?

JOSHUA: Chris...Look at me...its Joshua remember me?

HARRY: Ruth alert the hospital we have a near drowning

RUTH: Right.

CHRIS: No....

JOSHUA: just give me a moment...will you? I know this man ...Chris? ...

CHRIS. Sarah...

HARRY: GCS is four Bp's depressed get the scoop and let's get him in the wagon

JOSHUA: I know this man we were at college together

RUTH: Sir I'm going to need you let us do our job his BP is dangerously low and I believe that he has also been drinking

Sound of the stretcher being scraped along the ground. A walkie talkie crackles hissing like a disturbed snake, the dog is there rooting and sniffing at Chris prone on the grass like a truffle hound on the hunt

JOSHUA: Chris...Chris?

HARRY: Pulse rate dipping

CHRIS: Let me die...Please let me die...

JOSHUA: Don't talk like that...

CHRIS: I'm done. I'm finished.

Chris coughs his lungs straining.

JOSHUA: We're going to get you to the hospital

The dog barks and then growls an long burring snarl

RUTH: Is that your dog?

JOSHUA: No...Can you keep it away from him..?

RUTH: Go on get...Go on...Dumb as a stone...Won't budge...

A man being lifted in the stretcher and moved towards the ambulance wet heavy limbs and heavy ruffs of exertion as they struggle to steer Chris towards the ambulance, the wind whistles menacingly along the tufted banks of the reservoir, the dog rasps a half bark as he sees that they are leaving.

HARRY: He chose the perfect place to try and top himself...No bugger around here gives a damn....Colleague of mine had all the radio equipment from his ambulance nicked around here...Walkie talkies...mobiles the lot...

Chris begins to cough a deep hawking splutter his body doubling from its force

SARAH (V/O): My love...My love, where are you

CHRIS: My God...God....Sarah...

SARAH V/O: It is dark so dark there is mud in my veins where blood once was. I am soil and dirt and worm and my heart is full of grubs and black scuttling beetles, my body is melting into the earth and there is nothing I can do...

CHRIS: No...No...

JOSHUA: Chris...It's alright...

RUTH: He really didn't want to know anymore did he?

The dog barks, the ambulance doors shut. The radio bleats and spews out information, a drum beats slowly like a cry to war, we are in his heart in the red meat of Chris's pain.

CHRIS V/O: I think of us as we were only months before when your heart beat in time with mine and your eyes had never seemed so alive your smile so full.

Ext night a boat less than a year before

New Year's Eve. A Boat. The Thames. The hubbub of people momentarily free of the greyness of their lives. Glasses raised and clinked, a spasm of memory, as sure as a thrown spear. Chris and Sarah kiss.

SARAH: I'm proud of you

CHRIS: Why?

SARAH: For many reasons

CHRIS: Name one

SARAH: Stop fishing...

CHRIS: Why are you proud of me?

SARAH: Because you have great taste in women

CHRIS: That's cheating...Even if it's true...

She kisses him

SARAH: Of course it's true...Look at me...

CHRIS: Can we go home?

SARAH: What?

CHRIS: I'd like to go...

SARAH: Now?

CHRIS: Now

SARAH: Oh I see...

CHRIS: Yes... There's a woman I want to tend to

SARAH: Tend to..? I'm not a plot of land...

CHRIS: Depends how you look at it

SARAH: Don't look at it that way please...Makes me think of allotments
and...wellington boots...

CHRIS: No I meant daffodils and blossom and...

SARAH: Cabbages...

CHRIS: Stop it

The sound of fireworks. The thrumming of the boat's engine and the whistle of space and explosion of sound as the sky above them lights up in a streaming cascade of colour. The collective shouts of Happy New Year and the rising cheers of voices braying with delight.

SARAH: Happy New Year

CHRIS; Happy New Year my Love

SARAH: 2013

CHRIS: Our year

SARAH: Yes...We're lucky...

A pause a snatch of fractured breathing, the boat's hum, the wind claiming the space between them.

SARAH: Come here...Hold me....Dance with me...Let's forget the world for a moment...

CHRIS V/O: We moved as if fused together and never once thought of asking the question that haunts us all, because you see there was time, there was an ocean of time.

Six months later you were dead.

Int JOSHUA's house Present night

A clock ticks. Outside a dog whimpers its claws scratching at the door and tree branches thrash against the window like the last beats of a dying man's heart . Chris is waking.

JOSHUA: Here drink this

CHRIS: What is it?

JOSHUA: Water

CHRIS: Have you anything stronger

JOSHUA: No...All that stopped a long time ago

CHRIS: I know you

JOSHUA: Yes you know me...Well you knew me...

CHRIS: Where?

JOSHUA: At College

CHRIS: All Souls?

JOSHUA: Yes...We were friends.

CHRIS: Yes I remember now... Josh...

JOSHUA: That's right

CHRIS: Yes you were into anything...Any drug...Any high you could get your hands on...We were good friends. Close.

JOSHUA: Inseperable. We all are at some point

CHRIS: I thought that...There's something else...

JOSHUA: What? Here drink

CHRIS: Wait...I'm trying to remember...

JOSHUA: What is it?

CHRIS: Nothing I'm sure it will come to me...Where are we?

JOSHUA: My place.

CHRIS: Your place?

JOSHUA: Yes you refused to go home after the hospital had cleared you to leave...

You tried to drown yourself...At Black Moss reservoir.

I saw you...I was on my daily run and I could see a figure in the middle of the water...In distress and well...I jumped in...You were on the point of going under for good and I dragged you back to the shore...You weren't too pleased....

CHRIS: I'd had enough.

JOSHUA: Do you still feel that way?

CHRIS: I don't know how I feel.

JOSHUA: Anyway when you came round fully in the hospital you were bloody angry... they gave you sedatives, and then they offered you a bed, and you just kept saying, give me something I want, not something I need...They were confused by that...I have to say I wasn't.

CHRIS: Really?

JOSHUA: The Doctor treating you told me what had happened to Sarah, and I realized that there was nothing there for you, that there was no medication or x-ray that could fix what had been broken in you. They

didn't want you to leave...You were a liability...A danger to yourself...But you were insistent...You told them that they had no right to hold you...Eventually I gave them my word that I would be your guardian...So to speak...Look after you...Until you felt better. I just want you to know that I'm a good listener.

CHRIS: I'm not the talking kind.

JOSHUA: It might do you good

Ext JOSHUA's house Night.

The dog's whimpers grow in urgency becoming growls its pawing insistence to be admitted more forceful more present, and footsteps are heard running, a woman in distress.

SARAH V/O: It is damp and there are fumes...Petrol fumes... I am on the other side of love and it is cold and my heart is lost... Chris can you hear me... I am falling... Into the dark well where dreams go to die?

Flashback

CHRIS V/O: He couldn't look at me; his eyes moved and flickered like a man waking from a bad dream. I stared at him this young man, this policeman who bulged from his ill fitting uniform. Mr Burns, he said, there's been an accident a terrible mishap. That's what he said, a mishap, as if a bank account had been rifled, or a car stolen or a house burgled. A mishap, a life ceased, a love extinguished, my wife dead, was forgive me, more than a mishap. She had been killed on her way to the Law firm where she worked. It was raining, and the surface was treacherous, a cement lorry braked too late and careered through a red light and slammed into my wife's car. Her neck snapped like a twig beneath a young boy's foot. I'm sorry he said, I'm so sorry, but I was no longer listening I was moving in the horror of all that I had lost on the broken side of love.

SARAH V/O: It is night my Love...And dark waves of forgetting are swamping my mind...

Int JOSHUA's House. Present time Night

CHRIS: I need to go

JOSHUA: It's the middle of the night

CHRIS: I don't care

JOSHUA: I don't think that's a good idea...Remember I'm responsible for you...I gave them my word...

CHRIS: Joshua I'm fine...I'm not going to do anything stupid I just want to go home

JOSHUA: It'll take you an age...We're on the far side of the river

CHRIS: I want to walk

JOSHUA: I'll come with you

CHRIS: No you've done enough...Thank you...But I can't stay here...It's impossible...I've got to go....

JOSHUA: No Chris wait...

Ext JOSHUA's House Night

Outside JOSHUA's house night deep impenetrable darkness the sound of branches moving restlessly in the night wind and the driving rush of a river not too far off in the distance. The dog is there it yaps at Chris' heels like a perverted thought in a bad man's mind.

CHRIS: Go on go away leave me be...

The dogs circles him its bark deepening heavy with threat and power

CHRIS: Let me through you mangy cur...Go on shoo...Shoo...

SARAH V/O: Chris

CHRIS: Sarah?

SARAH V/O: where are you?

Her voice flits around the outer field of his hearing; he turns this way and that moving blindly in the darkness.

CHRIS: Sarah....Sarah.....Sarah...Sarah

Chris begins to run his breath falling in deep heavy rasps, the sound of his body careering into fern and undergrowth an owl calls in the distance, and the dog is in pursuit, its bullish body crashing through the tangle of weeds and forest, its barks sawing through the stillness of the night. After a while Chris stops winded, his breath rising and falling quickly, his mind unravelling.

CHRIS: Where am I?

The sound of the dog arriving, its breath more even than his, its aggression abated. It sniffs at Chris and whimpers.

CHRIS: Oh you're my friend now are you? I don't suppose you have any idea where we are?

A movement bare feet on undergrowth, the cracking of twigs the dog wheels and spits out a bark. A man is there.

MAN: He probably does, I speak dog if it helps any....

CHRIS: I don't understand

MAN: I speak cat, snake and kookaburra too...Although there's not much call for that round here

CHRIS: You're wearing pyjamas

MAN: Yes

CHRIS: Why?

MAN: Comfy...Lot of give in a pyjama...

CHRIS: Are you alright?

MAN: I'm fine a little lost like you but apart from that I can't complain. My owl is pretty impressive too. How about a short burst of barn owl...

CHRIS: No... Thanks... where am I?

MAN: At the elm tree

CHRIS: It's beautiful

MAN: Yes it is

CHRIS: You look terrible

MAN: I can't sleep, I can't eat, I can't leave here

CHRIS: Why?

MAN: Look

Chris looks up into the wisped tangle of the elm tree's branches and chimes sound like the faint tinkle of cutlery in a restaurant kitchen and whispers stir on the wind moving through the upper reaches of the leaves, soft voices of longing hypnotic and enchanting.

CHRIS: It's magnificent, it's big as large as a cathedral, and the sound is...

MAN: soothing

CHRIS: Yes

MAN: I find comfort here

CHRIS: It's mesmeric...

SARAH V/O: (a whisper an urgent push of need) Chris

CHRIS: Sarah?

SARAH V/O: Chris?

I am here

CHRIS: Help me Sarah. Sarah answer me.....Please answer....

MAN: What is it?

Chris's breathing is heightened, his mind opened like a fresh wound

MAN: You're scaring me

CHRIS: Sarah?

MAN: Please whoever you are can you leave...And take that dog with you...woof...woof...

The old man begins to whimper and softly bark it grows in intensity. The dog growls and the point of sound returns the piercing hum digging its way into the centre of Chris' brain. He lifts his head to the night and shouts...His voice torn his heart busted...he screams...the man does too...Then silence and the hushed breathing of two spooked men...slowly the chimes begin again...

CHRIS: Hello? Are you there? I heard you cry out...

MAN: Don't hurt me again

CHRIS: What do you mean?

MAN: You just grabbed me...By the throat...

CHRIS: What are you talking about? I've no wish to...I'm sorry I frightened you...

MAN: Go away...This is my place I was safe here..Let go of me...Help...Help me...

The sound of a body falling heavily followed by the panicked yelps of the dog and then silence with just the soft chimes from the dreamy towers of the elm tree breaking the stillness. Then water rushing into lungs into the coil of the inner ear. The thrash of a body limbs flailing in the deep hold of the lake. JOSHUA arrives.

Ext Elm tree Present time Night

JOSHUA: (close) Chris...Look at me...what are you doing?...Get up...come on...We must go...

The sound of Chris being lifted the dog barks and the wind gathers in force rasping through the pleading hands of the tree branches

CHRIS: Where is he? Where are you...?

JOSHUA: Who..?

CHRIS: the old man...

JOSHUA: What are you talking about?

CHRIS: The man who was here?

JOSHUA: What man..? Chris we're alone...

CHRIS: I saw him he was here...I think I hurt him

JOSHUA: Your mind is busted...Torn... You're exhausted Come on I'll get you home...But we must leave now...Right now

A voice as soft a child's prayer it is carried on the wind into the belly of the surrounding night. JOSHUA and Chris leave.

SARAH V/O: My one true love...I am yours...

Ext night forest. Present time.

Darkness as deep and black as the ink on an old bible the lifting of the wind stirring in the branches the rooting of the dog as it forages along the forest floor.

CHRIS: Is he yours...The dog..?

JOSHUA: No...He sort of adopted me earlier when I pulled you from the lake. He was sitting on my porch when we got back from the hospital.

CHRIS: It's strange...I felt he was protecting me earlier...

The sound of sniffing harsh and intrusive

JOSHUA: Really?

CHRIS: Yes...

CHRIS: Where exactly are we?

JOSHUA: South of the river just beyond the marsh.

CHRIS: Turner's Marsh?

JOSHUA: Yes

CHRIS: You don't sound too sure

JOSHUA: Of course I'm sure...Across the marsh...then the bridge and then well...Homeward bound...

CHRIS: it brings us out by...Where does it come out?

JOSHUA: Are you testing me?

CHRIS: No...My mind's gone blank...It must be the...

JOSHUA: Medication...

CHRIS: Yes...The medication...Let me think...We should come out by the docks down by Paradise Walk...That's right isn't it?

JOSHUA: sounds about right to me.

JOSHUA: Are you sure you want to do this? There's been a lot of rain recently and Turner's marsh may be a little treacherous. You could wait until morning.

CHRIS: No it's time to go home

JOSHUA: Well, the moon is out; we have the semblance of light at least.

CHRIS: Which way?

JOSHUA: Dead ahead towards the clearing

CHRIS: Right...

The wind stirs once more whispering faintly heard laments through the branches of the trees around them. The keening of men and women separated from their dreams, yearning for a time gone, for loves lost.

CHRIS: Do you hear it? The sound. Sarah's here...She spoke to me...Earlier she called to me....

JOSHUA: Chris we have to go

CHRIS: You're not listening to me.

JOSHUA: You're the one who is not listening...We're not safe here ...This area is notorious... Every thief and lowlife every scumbag with a hole in his pocket is on the lookout for someone exactly like you to come along...Now for the last time let's move.

We hear the wind catch the branches and the hushed violence of the voices rise, men women, children their dreams dying like fallen fruit.

CHRIS V/O:

I remember the first time I saw you

You shone in the darkness of my life

Like a new sun rising to claim the sky

I loved you

I wanted you and nothing less would do.

The wind once more, reeds thin piping beauty as the voices fall away, to be replaced by the sound of water moving, waves rolling towards a distant shore, and then a deeper thunder, of deep hidden water stirring.

Int Party. Night. The Past.

A cocktail evening the ripple of polite conversation and the odd bleat of laughter.

CHRIS: Christopher Burns, English teacher, dreamer.

SARAH: Sarah Demeger, law secretary, dream catcher.

CHRIS: Enchanted

SARAH: I hope so.

Ext Night Forest Present day night

Turner's Marsh the dog panting and rooting

JOSHUA: I'm really sorry to hear about Sarah...She was a fine woman...

CHRIS: Thanks

JOSHUA: Car crash I was told

CHRIS: You heard correctly

JOSHUA: At least it was instantaneous, a small mercy I suppose

CHRIS. Mercy?

JOSHUA: Yes

CHRIS: Mercy does not bring her back to me. Mercy does not breathe life back into her bones.

JOSHUA: I know

CHRIS: Do you?

JOSHUA: Look ...I know that the pain you hold so close...so tightly is real...That it has swallowed you whole...I can only imagine what it's like...But please don't punish those who reach out to you...That way you will die too but more slowly...More painfully...

CHRIS: What happened to you?

JOSHUA: What do you mean?

CHRIS: That night...

JOSHUA: When?

CHRIS: I drove you to the hospital

JOSHUA: That's a long time ago.

CHRIS: Yes but there's something else... You were sick.

JOSHUA: Yes you're right you're right, I was sick... And now I'm not.

CHRIS: It won't come

JOSHUA: What?

CHRIS: The memory of that night ...

JOSHUA: Let's just concentrate on getting you home... That's what you want isn't it?

CHRIS: Yes.

Ext Riverbank night present time.

A cry. A shout beating its way into the deep hold of the night. Ahead of them a fire and group of huddled and dishevelled souls, fighting the bite of the cold with lifted bottles of booze. Carl a man twisted with age roars again

CARL: Oy! Who are you? Oy! Who are you? Identify yourselves. Now who are you?

PEG: leave them be they're probably just lost...

CARL: This is my kingdom. This is my sodding land here and far as the opposite shore, nobody comes here without my say so

JOSHUA: It's alright this man is on his way to town.

KEITH: Strange way of going about it.

PEG: There are quicker more effective paths

JOSHUA: Yes but my friend is in a hurry

CARL: Your friend

CHRIS: Yes his friend

CARL: You?

CHRIS: Yes.

KEITH: I have trouble believing that

CHRIS: Why?

CARL: (*to Joshua*) You tell him

JOSHUA: This is not the time...

CHRIS: You know each other?

CARL: we've had our spats...

CHRIS: What does that mean?

CARL: (*to Joshua*) Well?

JOSHUA: (*to Carl*) Don't

CARL: Always trying to sneak by aren't you Joshua?

CHRIS: What is this?

CARL: You don't belong over there

JOSHUA: That's your opinion

CARL: You belong with us.

CHRIS: Joshua?

JOSHUA: It's a long story...The most important thing is to get you to the other side...

KEITH: The storms have taken everything, there's no way across. You'll have to go back.

CHRIS: What about the bridge...You said there was a bridge

CARL: Buggered. And so are you it seems.

KEITH: Snapped in two like she was made of balsa wood...No more bridge.

CHRIS: I need to get home.

CARL: That's what they all say. I have a small craft at my disposal...I could take you across if the conditions were suitable.

CHRIS: I have money

CARL: That's fortunate

CHRIS: Who are they?

CARL: Who

CHRIS: those people...There along the edge of the river

CARL: Just people...Lost and lonely...Penniless useless sorts...

A woman approaches she is drinking...

RACHEL: How much longer Carl? How much longer must I wait?

KEITH: Turn around and go back the way you came young lady before I take my hands to you

RACHEL: I can't stand it anymore...I want to leave

KEITH: Well whose fault is that?

RACHEL: Carl...Please I'll do anything...Anything...

CARL: I don't decide darling...Not my remit...The anything part intrigues me though

CHRIS: I know you

KEITH: Young woman...You're three heartbeats from a beating now go back to your own kind...

(Rachel begins to leave)

CHRIS: Don't talk to her like that...Wait...

KEITH: What did you say to me?

Chris moves towards her but she keeps walking he stops her... The dog snarls a long whine of building aggression the flames of the hastily built fires snap like loosened flags in the mounting wind

JOSHUA: Chris

CHRIS: Wait a minute...I know you

RACHEL: I doubt it

CHRIS: You look familiar

RACHEL: Please leave me alone.

She begins to walk off he gently stops her after a few steps

CHRIS: Look at me

RACHEL: I have never seen you before

CHRIS: That's not true

RACHEL: I don't know you

She continues drinking

CHRIS: You knew Sarah

RACHEL: Who?

CHRIS: My wife.

RACHEL: Sarah?

CHRIS: You're Rachel...Sarah's friend

RACHEL: You're mistaken. I don't know anybody anymore. Sometimes I wonder if I ever did.

CHRIS: I don't understand

KEITH: This is not the time Sir Galahad...A waste of bloody breath...

JOSHUA: Chris...Carl is waiting

CHRIS: Just a minute.

CHRIS: You were ill...Cancer...

RACHEL: Who told you that?

CHRIS: Sarah

RACHEL: Sarah?

CHRIS: Yes.

RACHEL: She's gone

CHRIS: You are Rachel.

JOSHUA: Chris...Chris...

RACHEL: Take me with you....Please help me ...You see I can't forget no matter how much I drink...I can't forget...

CHRIS: Forget?

RACHEL: Yes what I did...To myself.

KEITH: Come on...You've been told...Leave this guy alone

CHRIS: I want to bring her with us

CARL: Impossible

CHRIS: why?

CARL: Because no matter how much you offer you'll never be able to afford it

RACHEL: Goodbye Chris...

CHRIS: No.

JOSHUA: Chris let her go

CHRIS: She comes with us

CARL: Don't test me Chris.

RACHEL leaves

CHRIS: How did she end up here?

CARL: Who knows? Who cares? Booze...Pills...Needle...Take your pick...

CHRIS: She needs help she's sick she's got cancer...

KEITH: She's no sicker than the rest of us...

CARL: Put her from your mind...She's one of us...we'll look out for her...Now I have as I said I have a skiff I can take you across. How much is it worth? Everyone pays

CHRIS: How much?

PEG: Is that mutt yours?

JOSHUA: No

CARL: Dog's extra.

CHRIS: How long is the crossing?

CARL: That depends

CHRIS: On what?

CARL: On how much shit you're carrying...Listen... You see them...My friends over there they don't like people like you...New shiny souls with your designer this and your mobile that...do you think that these men and women here...these lost soldiers of life are going to let you turn around and leave...No...So you see...You're not exactly in a position to choose are you?...

PEG: I've seen him gut a man for the silver in his teeth.

The crowd of down and outs beyond inch forward along the bank getting closer and closer, the sounds of their menace rising like flies from a corpse, the dog growls.

CHRIS: Here...My wallet...It's a little damp but there's a leaf of notes in there.

CARL: Good man.

Ext river Present time. Boat Night.

The sound of the oars slapping the surface of the water, the whistle of the wind, the deeper water below heaves and booms like a dying whale. The dog whimpers its fear growing as the oars slap rhythmically in and out of the black water.

CHRIS: How much farther?

CARL: Why?

CHRIS: I just want to know

CARL: Be brave, and keep quiet.

CHRIS: What was Rachel doing here?

JOSHUA: Are you asking me? How would I know?

CHRIS: No I was just wondering...

CARL: Shut up both of you...

JOSHUA: She wasn't someone I knew

CARL: I said shut up. You're riling the dog...

Ext Coastline Day The past. Donegal Glencolumkille headland

The roar of sea spray the play of light on the mountains beyond tawny backed like sleeping lions

SARAH: It's magnificent...Look...Look out there on the horizon there...A sailing ship...Masted...Look at the sails...Like plumes...She's beautiful...

CHRIS: She's big...Must be all of two hundred feet...Look at the way she's riding the water.

SARAH: Where do you think she came from...Or going to?

CHRIS: No idea. She could have come from anywhere

SARAH: It's so rough out there...So wild...Isn't it magical to see a boat like that here...So proud and majestic...

CHRIS: Yes

SARAH: It's breathtaking...I love it here

CHRIS: Me too.

SARAH: Glencoumbkille... ...God's beauty...You can see his hand everywhere you look...

CHRIS. If you held with such things

SARAH: Oh Chris don't spoil it

CHRIS. What? I'm just saying that well you know what I'm saying

SARAH: Yes that you don't believe

CHRIS: Not necessarily.

SARAH: Then what?

CHRIS: Why do we always look for affirmation from some benevolent Pixie in the sky...why can't we claim things for ourselves....And be happy with that.

SARAH: Because we're not made that way

CHRIS: I am.

SARAH: You think you are...But I know you...You're afraid of the dark just like the rest of us.

CHRIS: That's not true.

SARAH: Did you know that there's a flower that can bloom in the dark, it's called the moonflower?

CHRIS: No I didn't

SARAH: It's South American I think and it's shaped like the moon and when the rest of the world is asleep it flourishes, it unfurls its beauty in the darkness. Alone in the deep black night, this brave little flower hoists up its beautiful white sails, like that boat out there and offers its heart to the world.

CHRIS: Is that what you are a moonflower?

SARAH: We all are Chris...Even you....

Ext Present time night boat the far side of the river

The scraping arrival of the dingy on the stony shore. A bark.

CHRIS: Thanks

CARL: Don't mention it

CHRIS: Which is the quickest way to the town from here?

CARL: How would I know I live on the other side of the river?

JOSHUA: We'll manage...

CHRIS: Can I ask you a favour?

CARL: Fire away

CHRIS: Could I have my wallet back...Just the wallet the money's yours.

CARL: It's good leather...Expensive.

CHRIS: Yes but there's a photo in the little pocket, that I would like to keep...A photo of my wife.

CARL: The photo you can have

CHRIS: Thanks.

CARL: But the wallet's mine.

(sound of rummaging)

There's no photo here

CHRIS: Let me look

CARL: Do you think I'm an imbecile...No photo here...It doesn't exist. Now start walking before one of these oars does more than just row.

CHRIS: Look again.

JOSHUA: Leave it Chris

CHRIS: Look again.

CARL: Watch your tone son...You don't know who you're dealing with.

CHRIS: There's a photo of my dead wife in that wallet and I want it.

CARL: Get out of my sight...

JOSHUA: let's go...Don't upset yourself anymore...it's alright Carl I have this

CARL: I hope so...Because the water out there is deep...And it wouldn't be the first time I've availed myself of it...Do you understand?

JOSHUA: Yes

CARL: Good now piss off. And take that flea bitten hound with you. Oh and Joshua take good care now do you hear? I'll see you very soon.

The sound of oars rasping across shingle a grunt, a quick panting noise like a woman in distress or on the point of joy, then a sigh that rises on the slap of the water as Carl's skiff pulls away, a name whispered from the deep.

SARAH V/O: Christopher my love dream of me... Tell the deep water of your love for me whisper it to the fractured light as it reaches you from above. Move with the failing beats of your heart as it sings to me and I will answer I promise I will answer.

Int. House Dinner Party - Flashback

Some years before the dinner party where Chris and Sarah first met.

SARAH: So you're Irish?

CHRIS: In part

SARAH: where does the other part belong?

CHRIS: With you

SARAH: You don't waste time

CHRIS: That's because it's finite

SARAH: There are some who would disagree with you

CHRIS: A man's life I mean...is finite

SARAH: I know what you meant

CHRIS: One step ahead of me

SARAH: Believe me with men it is better to be ahead of the game...

CHRIS: I'm not like that...I'm not...

SARAH: What...?

CHRIS: A game player...An operator...

SARAH: Right

CHRIS: I assure you

SARAH: I must warn you that I am a very difficult person to live with

CHRIS: I was hoping that would be the case

SARAH: No I mean it

CHRIS: So do I

SARAH: I don't like duplicity. And I abhor neediness, I need to know I'm with a man and not a child... I've cared for too many lost boys...I'm sorry I don't mean to frighten you.

CHRIS: You're not frightening me...Far from it...

SARAH: Good so when are we going to see each other again?

CHRIS: How about now?

SARAH: What do you mean?

CHRIS: How well do you know the host?

SARAH: Not very well...Hardly at all in fact.

CHRIS: I have a very passing acquaintance with him

SARAH: And?

CHRIS: Well let's go out and find some food that isn't on sticks and...

SARAH: And what?

CHRIS: And see

SARAH: I couldn't have put it better myself.

CHRIS V/O:

I didn't try and kiss you

Even though my heart demanded it

You were waiting for me

to be brave. I remember how the noise around

us fell away and the world stilled and my desire

for you rose within me like a bird claiming the sky

for the first time. Not yet my heart whispered, no not yet.

Ext night Present time Marshland by the river.

Night Joshua and Chris walk through undergrowth, the dog close by

JOSHUA: You shouldn't have asked for the wallet

CHRIS: I didn't...I wanted the photo

JOSHUA: well same thing

CHRIS: Stop worrying

JOSHUA: You're the one who should be worried

CHRIS: What does that mean?

JOSHUA: Nothing...That man is dangerous and there are more and more of them...The whole region is becoming overrun all the way from the disused Palais back across the river to my place...
Vagabonds...Losers...Thieves...They're everywhere.

CHRIS: He was just a thug that's all...He seemed to know you quite well though

JOSHUA: There was no photo

CHRIS: I thought that there was

JOSHUA: But there wasn't you see there wasn't and that's what made it dangerous

CHRIS: What are you talking about?

JOSHUA: There was no photo

CHRIS: I know that's what he said...Joshua...What's wrong..?

Are you alright?

JOSHUA: Yes...Yes I'm fine...At least we're out of the Marsh

CHRIS: Yes.

JOSHUA: We must be at Abbingdon fields...

CHRIS: Abbingdon fields?...

JOSHUA: One more push and we'll be there.

CHRIS: I've never heard of Abbingdon fields?

JOSHUA: You're close Chris...Very near the Palais...That faces the docks...You do trust me don't you.

CHRIS: I do of course I trust you. But there's something...A thing that I can't shake...About that night...

JOSHUA: What night...

CHRIS: When you...You were in bad shape...

JOSHUA: Chris I'm fine...I'm clean....I'm well...

CHRIS: Yes...I see that...Yes you are...

JOSHUA: Good...Well if it helps any you seem better

CHRIS: Do I?

JOSHUA: Yes. Less...Broken...

CHRIS: Maybe...I don't know...In a strange way I'm pleased that there was no photo.

JOSHUA: Good. Well perhaps it's time to move on.

The snap of a branch in the quickening wind, a whisper a hushed entreaty rising out of the emptiness.

SARAH V/O My love not yet no not yet. I am the whisper in the corridors of your mind...I am the tempest in your heart.

Int Chris and Sarah's apartment night. Some years before.

A radio and the turn of a door as it is opened in haste. Chris enters.

CHRIS: Something's happened

SARAH: What? Where were you?

CHRIS: Oh God

SARAH: Chris you're scaring me

CHRIS: I was at the hospital

SARAH: Why? Are you hurt?

CHRIS: No..No .I'm fine...

CHRIS: It's Josh

SARAH: What about him?

CHRIS: He's overdosed

SARAH: No

CHRIS: Abby rang me from the payphone at the bottom of their stairs... It was messed up...

SARAH: Why didn't she call an ambulance?

CHRIS: Fear...It was heroin...He'd shot up a batch of new stuff...And she was frightened...I don't know....

SARAH: what happened?

CHRIS: He was blue...his eyelids half closed his lips cracked his body emaciated...It was terrible...I tried to find a pulse...I put my ear to his mouth and I was sure I could feel the faintest kick of breath...And I knew...

SARAH: What?

CHRIS: That we had to move that there was no time for ambulances or doctors...That he was almost gone...we found my car and I must have broken four red lights to get him to the hospital.

SARAH: And?

CHRIS: We were too late.... The doctor treating him said it was strange there was no fight in him...No will...That it was as if he had decided to go...That it had been deliberate...I got angry with him when he said that...Told him that was arrant crap...

SARAH: My baby I'm so sorry

CHRIS: He's dead.

SARAH: Come here

CHRIS: Joshua's dead.

Ext. Present night. Abbingdon Fields

Wet grass against shoe and the harsh breathing of men pressing onwards into the dark the boisterous yelps of the dog as it forages ahead deep into the blackness

CHRIS: Let's turn around....

JOSHUA: We can't

CHRIS: Why not?

JOSHUA: There's no way back...It's impossible

CHRIS: Nonsense...

JOSHUA: it's too late you've crossed the river...

(The sound of breath easing, the two men stand silently together, the wind abating and the night as quiet as a tomb)

CHRIS: Who are you?

JOSHUA: What...?

CHRIS: I said who are you?

JOSHUA: I'm Joshua

CHRIS: Joshua is dead

JOSHUA: What are you saying?

CHRIS: I remember I remember... I was there...I was with Abby you were with us we were driving...You had overdosed...She called me and I came over and carried you to the car like a child to try and get you to the hospital...You were skin and bone...You were dying Joshua...That's why there is no way back...

JOSHUA: Chris...

CHRIS: How can that be...Answer me...

JOSHUA: You're confused

CHRIS: I'm not

JOSHUA. It is Sarah who is dead

CHRIS: I know ...

JOSHUA: Do you?

CHRIS: What's that supposed to mean?

JOSHUA: Nothing

CHRIS: Joshua...I've had enough of this...I have a memory it is clear...It is vivid...And it is of the doctor telling me that you had passed...That's what he said...Joshua has passed.

JOSHUA: That's not possible

CHRIS: What's going on Joshua?

JOSHUA: Nothing

CHRIS: Don't treat me like an imbecile

JOSHUA: I'm not

CHRIS: What happened that night?

JOSHUA: I don't want to talk about it

CHRIS: Why?

JOSHUA: It is not the time

CHRIS: What?

JOSHUA: it's too painful for me

CHRIS: So you survived

JOSHUA: We should get on...We're not far from the Palais and the moon is back and she is beautiful...Look at her...A tough bright winter moon.

Int Chris and Sarah's apartment night. Some years before.

The radio is off a siren sounds in the distance rain splutters against the windows

SARAH: It was coming...He was...

CHRIS: What?

SARAH: Someone...Well...In love with Death...

CHRIS: Is that how you saw him?

SARAH: He looked for it...It sat in his eyes...You know...

CHRIS: No I don't

SARAH: The brokenness...He couldn't live...He didn't know how...

CHRIS: Do you...Do any of us?

Ext.Present night .Abbingdon fields

the sound of people moving listlessly as if far from love rising voices ring out in the air the heavy tread of feet through undergrowth and the rasped breathing of two men moving tufted grass. Suddenly JOSHUA stops and waits after a moment Chris stops and looks back at him. The dog begins to yap excitedly in anticipation.

JOSHUA: We're here

CHRIS: I don't know this place

JOSHUA: Yes you do...You've been searching for it all night...Longer...Ever since she was taken from you...

CHRIS: Where am I Joshua?

JOSHUA: Where you wanted to be...Whether you decide to stay or not is up to you.

CHRIS: You've tricked me

JOSHUA: No

CHRIS: You told me you would get me home

JOSHUA: You heard what you wanted to hear and I was happy to oblige... But something else...Something deeper drew you here

CHRIS: I don't understand

JOSHUA: You're lucky

CHRIS: What?

JOSHUA: To have known love such as that...

CHRIS: Sarah...

JOSHUA: It's funny when you are on the point of death...Every sense is heightened...Every nerve ending every synapse crackles with vitality and you feel more connected to the world than at any point when you were alive...

CHRIS: What do you mean..?

JOSHUA: I remember you finding me...The look of terror in your eyes as you bent to tend to me...

CHRIS: You remember

JOSHUA: There was love too...Deep tenderness...You loved me

CHRIS: Yes

JOSHUA: And you did everything you could...But I wanted it...

A deep bark from the dog the screams of two or more women in distress and the pressing of figures...Their bodies bony with loss...their eyes as dark as opals. They begin to speak it is needy and aggressive. There is threat and it is tangible.

VOICE 1: Hungry...Can you hear me? I need your help ...feed me...

VOICE 2: Tired... So Tired...Do you hear me? You there on the other side of the morning...

VOICE 3: Reach out to me sirs...I've been trapped...Are you here to free us. Please...Please...

JOSHUA: Chris

CHRIS: What is it?

JOSHUA: Stay very still...Don't move do you hear me?

CHRIS: What's going on?

JOSHUA: Just do as you're told...

VOICE 1: Please...Grief has made my heart homeless

VOICE 2: Lost...I am lost...Lead me back to the light...Help me

JOSHUA: I told you...There are more and more of them...It's just the way of the world...

VOICE 1: Have you lost someone...is it me? Am I the one?

VOICE 2: Take me in your arms and save me...

CHRIS: My God

JOSHUA: They come and they go

CHRIS: What have you done to me?

JOSHUA: They live and they die

CHRIS: I'm cold

JOSHUA: They are blinded by all that they have lost like you

CHRIS: So cold

JOSHUA: You are dying

CHRIS: Help me

JOSHUA: Chris... You're right I died that night... My overdose was not accidental...It was planned.

CHRIS: I can't see

JOSHUA: ...Eventually I will be forgiven and I will move on...

CHRIS: My heart...There is ice in my heart...

JOSHUA: That's the thermic shock from the drowning your body is giving up on you...

CHRIS: Please...I beg you...

JOSHUA: Call her

CHRIS: What?

JOSHUA: Call her...Call Sarah...It is your only hope...I must go now. Carl is waiting for me...He will take me back across the river...

CHRIS: I tried to save you...

JOSHUA: Yes you did and I am too... Believe me...Goodbye Chris...Call her...She is waiting...

The dog barks...Joshua leaves.... A scattering of movement as figures press in on Chris, shadows plucked from the night and given limbs and mouths and dark beating hearts...The dog yelps and wheels as the threats get closer.

Waves and waves of sound like pebbles scattered along a shore hissed surf and the deep booming thunder of deep water colliding, like thoughts being formed in the cradle of a torn mind. Chris is alone. The figures wearing the black cloth of the night are getting closer until they press against his flesh

VOICES: Chris...Chris...Chris...ssssss Christopher.

There is a man he is wearing rags and his eyes are ringed with blackness he moves with the heaviness of a man defeated. His breathing is ragged. The whispers rise and fall, a dog barks in the distance.

GRIEVING MAN: I hear her...Night and day...hour by hour she calls to me

CHRIS: Please my heart...I can't feel my heart

GRIEVING MAN: She is a whisper away from me...and I feel her...my body hungers for her touch...But she never comes.

CHRIS: I have no pulse

GRIEVING MAN: She was taken from me...Ripped from the harbour of my soul...Her body tossed to the maggots and the grubs...

CHRIS: Help me

GRIEVING MAN: No-one cares the world still turns the badness grows and people look the other way...They tell me to think of the future to reach forward into what is to come and to take comfort there but I can't you see she was the moon in my sky. The masted sail on my horizon...without her I am nothing...I am dust and memory nothing more...Sarah...My Sarah

CHRIS: ...Sarah...Where are you?...Save me...Please save me...

GRIEVING MAN: Sarah save me....

SARAH: My Love...My only love...

The dog begins to howl Chris's voice rises on the wind mingling with that of the grieving man rising in pain and loss joining the other cries of the lost and the bereft, a vale of mourning and exile.

Chris is alone his breath falling heavily his voice softly saying

Someone is there, a man, heavy, imposing his breathing deep and steady. When he speaks it is matter of fact as if he were a banker reeling numbers off a ledger

CHRIS: Joshua?

HADES: Guess again...

CHRIS: what?

HADES: Joshua works for me. He spoke on your behalf. He told me that you weren't quite decided, we'll see.

CHRIS: Who are you?

HADES: I think you know

CHRIS: Where am I?

HADES: Just in front of the Palais.

CHRIS: Then I'm nearly home.

HADES: Maybe. That's up to you

CHRIS: It's too dark I can't see your face, move out of the shadow into the moonlight.

HADES: I don't think that's a good idea do you?

CHRIS: Why not?

HADES: Well once you've seen my face...You're mine.

The panted welcome of the dog as it arrives recognizing its master it scurries to the man's side

CHRIS: He's yours?

HADES: Yes. His name is Scareb. I sent him to Joshua to watch over things. He is loyal and he is fierce.

The sounds of dawn, the faint twitch of birdsong rising. The fields are quiet the shadows of threat have receded for now

CHRIS: I heard her

HADES: Sarah?

CHRIS: I want to see her.

HADES: She lives in the palais... Is that what you want to spend your days here before the steps of the place that houses your true love in dark relentless terror or do you want to live. You see you tricked you way to us... You have broken the ceiling of your destiny and that has a price. I must warn you your body is failing and the water has almost taken you. Your time is nearly done.

CHRIS: I must see her

A rush of water a deep booming song of deep hidden depths and a cascade of sound in the inner ear the music of memory and love and the need of a man reaching out for salvation. Suddenly she is there a patchwork of light and dream, she flickers before him like the flame of a candle by a child's bedside.

SARAH: Chris

CHRIS: Is it really you...

SARAH: it's alright...

CHRIS: I look terrible...Sorry

SARAH: You are beautiful...

CHRIS: I have nothing without you

SARAH: No you have all that we had together ...You must go back...

CHRIS: I want you

SARAH: That's not possible

CHRIS: Let me touch you

SARAH: No

CHRIS: I want to hold you

SARAH: You can't

(he cries, tears of frustration hot and heavy with sorrow)

CHRIS: Why? Please let me hold you one more time.

SARAH: That's impossible

CHRIS: Why? Why?

SARAH: Because I am dead my love...I am dead.

Int hospital past some months before

the squeak of orderlies plimsolls on waxed floors the brusque swish of Doctors and nurses moving to and fro the crackle of a tannoy

DOCTOR: Mr Burns?

CHRIS: Yes

DOCTOR: We need an identification of your wife's body...Do you feel up to it...I'm sorry but it is expected.

CHRIS: Yes...I understand.

DOCTOR: This way.

Int Hospital mortuary Past some months before

ORDERLY: Mr Burns

CHRIS: Yes...

DOCTOR: Is this her...Is this your wife Sarah Theresa Burns?

Ext Abbingdon fields. Present time.

Dawn is drawing lines of light across the sky darkness is receding Sarah and Chris stand facing each other the wind has dropped

SARAH: I will always be with you where the heart meets the horizon of the soul...Like that ship...Do you remember?

CHRIS. Glencolumbkille

SARAH: Yes...

CHRIS: You are dead

SARAH: I am dead

CHRIS: And I am alive

SARAH: Yes

CHRIS: I love you

Int Water.Present time

we are in the reservoir with Chris in the wide deep hold of this brackish world sound is muted and hollow and booms in the inner ear like the drum from a distant war

SARAH: Look up Chris...Do you see the light?

CHRIS: Yes

SARAH: Move with me

CHRIS: How?

SARAH: Reach... Upwards...Reach for everything you have yet to do...For everything you have yet to be...

...Your life is waiting for you...

CHRIS: I see someone

SARAH: I love you

CHRIS: There is a man...He is swimming towards me...

SARAH: Yes...

CHRIS: I remember the flower

SARAH: The moonflower...

CHRIS: Yes

The boom of water still deep pure water echoing with silence and the even pattern of Chris' breathing. He is at peace and no longer fights. We hear the soft tread of limbs extending themselves in the deep.

CHRIS V/O:

There is a flower that can bloom in the dark
It is as white as a winter Moon and it unfurls
Itself to the darkness spreading its white petals
Like sails when the rest of the world is asleep
It is fragile and beautiful and it dares the blackness
It challenges the deep shadows that can take hold
In a man's heart. It is called the moonflower and it
Flares like a beacon of hope in a desert of grief.
We all like that flower she said a long time ago
Yes. Yes we are. We defy the dark just like that
Tiny flower. We give love in spite of loss, in spite of
Pain. We defy the night, the night that has no right
To be king.

The fury of rushing water building and building desperate for release, a rasp of coughing and the spluttered relief of someone coming to.

Ext. Dawn the bank of the reservoir present time

RUTH: We have him...

HARRY That's it... Get it all out son that's the way...

RUTH: We thought we'd lost you there...

HARRY: Thought you were history.

PASSERBY: Thank God.

HARRY: Hi my name is Harry...This is...

PASSERBY: James...

HARRY: He pulled you out of the swim...

CHRIS: Cold...I'm cold

HARRY: Not surprised...It's bitter in that reservoir and those thin pyjamas you're wearing won't have helped any

JAMES. As long as he's alive that's the main thing

RUTH: He's alive alright...Aren't you?

CHRIS: Yes that's right...Yes I'm alive.

MUSIC TO END