

(NB: THROUGHOUT THE PLAY, THE LITERAL LOCATION REMAINS THE SAME, AS DOES THE TIME: MOTHER'S CARE HOME ROOM, MONDAY, 15.36. BUT AS THE MOODS PROGRESS, THAT PHYSICAL SPACE MORPHS¹ IN THE IMAGINATION OF THE CHARACTERS INTO THE MANY OTHER TIMES AND PLACES THEY HAVE KNOWN, SEPARATELY – IN MOTHER'S CASE - AND TOGETHER.)

FX: SOUNDSCAPE: THE EMOTIONAL WORLD OF THE TWO CHARACTERS - FRAGMENTS OF MEMORY, FEELING, EXPERIENCE. VARIOUSLY: WAVES BREAKING ON SEASHORE; GULLS. COFFEE SHOP (CLATTER OF CROCKERY, COFFEE MACHINE, LOW-LEVEL CHATTER). AIR-RAID SIREN; PLANES OVERHEAD; BOMBS FALLING FAR AND NEAR. MUSIC (MOZART, SCHUBERT², GLENN MILLER, A CHILDREN'S CHOIR SINGING A COMEDY SONG³). CHURCH BELLS PEALING. BIRDS: DAWN CHORUS. WIMBLEDON: TENNIS MATCH AND CROWD REACTION. URBAN TRAFFIC.

TITLES: *THE THINGS WE NEVER SAID BY MING HO*

SOUNDSCAPE CONTINUES, TO END WITH A SMALL DOG BARKING; LITTLE GIRL GIGGLES...

¹ C.f. Joanne Harris' "shed".

² E.g. Janet Baker: The Trout (Die Forelle) – a motif later in the play.

³ E.g. Bananas in Pyjamas, A Windmill in Old Amsterdam.

**FADING OUT TO THE FLAT ACOUSTICS OF THE
EVERYDAY “ROOM”.**

1 WOMAN: (VO: INTERNAL) In this moment, I am a forty-five-year-old woman. I am not married. I have no children.

I live in a small flat on the top floor of a converted house. I drive a car, a metallic red hatch-back. I passed my test nearly twenty-five years ago. (I have three points for speeding.)

I work from home on my computer. I can look out of my window and see the street and gardens below; my neighbour's cat, stalking a bird in the bushes. Roses, sweet peas, and camellias...

I have a wide circle of friends; I send them Christmas cards. Or an email at least.

We go for drinks, my friends and I. Barbeques in the summer. I'm not sporty, although I go to the gym. I like to watch films and plays.

It is Monday. Fifteen thirty-six. It says so on my phone. But I could guess at that, if I were out of battery.

I have spoken to no-one today, but I know who I am. I am in the moment.

2 MOTHER: I am in the moment.

**FX: THIS IS THE FIRST INDICATION OF ANOTHER
PRESENCE AND A SHIFT FROM LITERAL TO**

**IMAGINARY. SOME SUBTLE ACOUSTIC CHANGE
TO SIGNAL THIS - AMBIENT MUSIC COMING IN
UNDERNEATH? THE FOLLOWING DIALOGUE
TAKES ON THE ABSTRACT QUALITY OF A
THERAPEUTIC ENQUIRY (NON-NATURALISTIC).**

- 1 MOTHER: In this moment... I am... a girl. Waiting.
- 2 WOMAN: Waiting for - ?
- 3 MOTHER: - My parents. I don't know where they are. Have you
seen them?
- 4 WOMAN: Not for a very long time...
- 5 MOTHER: Why is that?
- 6 WOMAN: Tell me about yourself.
- 7 MOTHER: Tell you what?
- 8 WOMAN: Tell me what you know, in the moment.
- 9 MOTHER: I'm alone.
- 10 WOMAN: *I'm* here.
- 11 MOTHER: No, but I'm alone.
- 12 WOMAN: What else?
- 13 MOTHER: I don't like this place.

1 WOMAN: It seems nice enough to me...

2 MOTHER: You don't know. What happens when you're not here.

3 WOMAN: What happens?

4 MOTHER: I don't know! I don't like it.

5 WOMAN: Where would you rather be?

6 MOTHER: Home.

7 WOMAN: You are home.

8 MOTHER: You're starting to annoy me!

9 WOMAN: Tell me about this moment.

10 MOTHER: I'm waiting for my parents. They seem to have
disappeared. Everyone's disappeared.

11 WOMAN: You've got me.

12 MOTHER: You're no good. (BEAT) I'm frightened.

13 WOMAN: Of what?

 (MOTHER SAYS NOTHING, FRUSTRATED.)

14 WOMAN: There's nothing to be frightened of –

1 MOTHER: - You don't know.

2 WOMAN: No-one will harm you; I won't let them.

3 MOTHER: You won't know.

4 WOMAN: Who do you love?

5 MOTHER: What? Who...?

6 WOMAN: Who do you love?

(A BEAT.)

7 MOTHER: My mother, of course. Who do *you* love?

8 WOMAN: My mother.

SCENE TITLE**FLOWERS**

**FX: IN LITERAL TERMS, WE ARE IN MOTHER'S
ROOM IN A CARE HOME. SMALL,
CLAUSTROPHOBIC, NO SENSE OF THE WORLD
OUTSIDE. (WE ARE IN THE SAME LOCATION
THROUGHOUT; ALL THE ACOUSTIC MOODS ARE
IN THE IMAGINARY WORLD).**

**THE FOLLOWING DIALOGUE IS THE KIND OF
CONVERSATION THEY MIGHT HAVE HAD IN REAL
LIFE, BUT HERE IT IS IMAGINED – AN ACT OF
SHARED REVERIE THAT GRADUALLY EVOKES
SENSUAL MEMORY.**

**AS THE SCENE PROGRESSES WE BECOME
AWARE OF SOUNDS AND ACOUSTIC QUALITIES
REFERENCED IN THE DIALOGUE.**

- | | | |
|---|---------|----------------------------|
| 1 | MOTHER: | I carried freesias. |
| 2 | WOMAN: | When? |
| 3 | MOTHER: | On my wedding day. |
| 4 | WOMAN: | You remember that? |
| 5 | MOTHER: | Of course! You were there. |
| 6 | WOMAN: | I don't think so. |

1 MOTHER: Yes. You and Daddy.

2 WOMAN: OK...

3 MOTHER: I carried freesias.

4 WOMAN: Are they in season? In the winter?

5 MOTHER: They must have been. Yellow and white.

6 WOMAN: That's lovely.

7 MOTHER: You were there.

8 WOMAN: In spirit, maybe...

(A BEAT.)

9 WOMAN: We had a garden by the sea, when I was a little girl.

**FX: FROM THIS POINT, WE ARE DRAWN INTO THE
ATMOSPHERE OF THAT GARDEN BY THE SEA - ON
THE ROMNEY MARSH, NEAR DUNGENESS AND
CAMBER SANDS. A REMOTE PLACE, NOT A
RESORT (FLAT LAND, BIG SKY): SEA BIRDS, WIND,
AN OCCASIONAL DISTANT FOG HORN...**

A SENSE OF GOLDEN, BREEZY INNOCENCE.

10 MOTHER: Did we?

- 1 WOMAN: Yes. Pebbles in the soil. The wind blew in from the shore – a tanning wind. You loved to sunbathe –
- 2 MOTHER: Did I?
- 3 WOMAN: - anointed with olive oil! A tiny bottle from the chemist. We didn't cook with it then.
- 4 MOTHER: I smothered myself in oil?
- 5 WOMAN: Your arms, brown as saddle leather, rich mahogany...
- 6 MOTHER: That doesn't sound very nice.
- 7 WOMAN: You revelled in it. There are pictures. You and me, in that garden.
- 8 MOTHER: I don't know.
- 9 WOMAN: Me, in a pink crocheted dress, little white ankle socks, white kid shoes. Bending to sniff a pink rose...
- 10 MOTHER: And what am I doing?
- 11 WOMAN: You come out of the house in an apron. You must have been cooking, I think.
- 12 MOTHER: And where are you?
- 13 WOMAN: I'm in the garden. Sniffing a rose. I come skipping up the path to meet you.

1 MOTHER: Sweet little girl!

2 WOMAN: Yes. That was me.

 (A BEAT.)

3 WOMAN: *He* planted the roses.

4 MOTHER: Who?

5 WOMAN: Daddy.

6 MOTHER: (UNKNOWNING) Oh, yes.

7 WOMAN: Roses, sweet peas, and camellias...

8 MOTHER: It was a lovely garden.

9 WOMAN: It was. He planted vegetables too: carrots and potatoes.
 I helped to dig them up.

10 MOTHER: Did you?

11 WOMAN: I popped the pods on the senna tree – like big, fat
 garden peas. I liked to stand in the shade, under the
 yellow flowers, and pop those big, fat pods...

12 MOTHER: There was a swing.

13 WOMAN: Yes!

14 MOTHER: A blue swing.

**FX: A SUBTLE SWOOSH OF THE SWING, BACK
AND FORTH, AND A LITTLE GIRL GIGGLING;
CONTINUES UNDER FOR A WHILE...**

- 1 WOMAN: He used to push me on that swing.
- 2 MOTHER: I didn't?
- 3 WOMAN: Not that I recall. It's not in the photos.
- 4 MOTHER: It was a lovely garden.
- 5 WOMAN: Full of colour: antirrhinum, scabious, marigolds, and
petunias...
- 6 MOTHER: Purple rock –
- 7 WOMAN: - White alyssum; or “Alison”, as I called it.
- 8 MOTHER: Roses.
- 9 WOMAN: Pink and yellow.
- 10 MOTHER: He planted them...
- 11 WOMAN: ... Sweet peas and camellias.
- (A BEAT)
- 12 MOTHER: We had pinks.

- 1 WOMAN: That was another garden.
- 2 MOTHER: Honeysuckle. Lilac. Geraniums in tubs.
- 3 WOMAN: On Bank Holidays, we'd go to the garden centre.
- 4 MOTHER: Fuchsias, in hanging baskets –
- 5 WOMAN: - Pansies and petunias. I planted them in the borders.
The soil was heavy clay there...
- 6 MOTHER: Squirrels ate the pinks.
- 7 WOMAN: They did.
- 8 MOTHER: Cheeky little buggers.

(A BEAT)

**FX: END OF THE REVERIE. WE ARE BACK IN THE
CARE HOME ROOM.**

- 9 WOMAN: Now I bring you flowers...
- 10 MOTHER: Do you?
- 11 WOMAN: Yes. Alstroemeria: pink and yellow, orange, mauve, and
cerise. They last for a week or more; that's why I
choose them. They survive.
- 12 MOTHER: Carnations...

- 1 WOMAN: Sometimes, yes. They're hardy too. Yellow and pink.
- 2 MOTHER: Squirrels ate the pinks.
- 3 WOMAN: I bring you flowers. Sometimes you're asleep. I trim
 them, put them in water, arrange them in a vase. And
 then you might wake up.
- 4 MOTHER: We'll have a nice cup of tea.
- 5 WOMAN: A cup of tea and cake. (BEAT) You don't seem to
 notice the flowers. Preoccupied... But I persist.
- 6 MOTHER: Do you? Why?
- 7 WOMAN: A gesture. An image. A thought that might get through.

I bring flowers, so you know I was there. Even if you
don't see me.

I bring flowers to show them someone cares – you are
not alone.

I bring flowers to remind you I exist; someone who loves
you exists.

(BEAT)

I bring flowers.

SCENE TITLE **KEYS**

A REMEMBERED MOMENT SET IN THE FAMILY HOME PRIOR TO ENTERING THE CARE HOME.

TRANSITION FX: EXT. URBAN TRAFFIC NOISE
(MOTION: SHOOM-SHOOM OF VEHICLES PASSING
AT SPEED, ROARING ENGINES, THE OCCASIONAL
ANGRY BLAST OF HORN OR PASSING WAIL OF
BLUE LIGHT SIREN).

THEN: WE ARE IN THE HALLWAY OF MOTHER'S
SUBURBAN HOUSE, PRIOR TO ENTERING THE
CARE HOME. A SENSE OF MORE SPACE THAN IN
SCENE 1 – MOVING THROUGH SEVERAL ROOMS,
AS DETAILED BELOW.

INSISTENT KNOCKING, BANGING ON THE FRONT
DOOR. DOORBELL: LOUD AND ANGRY, HELD IN A
LONG PRESS; REPEATED, IMPATIENT. MORE
KNOCKING. NOT LITERAL, A CACOPHONY OF
AURAL ASSAULT FROM THE WORLD OUTSIDE.

(WOMAN HURRIES DOWNSTAIRS.)

1 WOMAN: (OFF) All right, all right, I'm coming!

(SHE RUSHES INTO THE LIVING ROOM. MOTHER IS THERE, UNCONCERNED.)

(NB: MOTHER IS NOT “CONFUSED” IN THIS SCENE:
AS FAR AS SHE IS CONCERNED, SHE IS IN
CONTROL, WOMAN IS UNNECESSARILY CREATING
PANIC. THEY ARE BOTH SLIGHTLY YOUNGER
HERE – MORE ENERGETIC THAN IN SCENE 1.)

1 WOMAN: (TO MOTHER) Have you hidden the keys?

(SHE CASTS ABOUT FRANTICALLY, LOOKING:
OPENS AND CLOSES DRAWERS OR A LIDDED
TABLE; EMPTIES OUT TRINKET JARS, LIFTS
CROCKERY, BOOKS, NEWSPAPERS...)

2 MOTHER: What do you want?

3 WOMAN: There's somebody at the door.

4 MOTHER: They can take a running jump.

5 WOMAN: It might be something important.

6 MOTHER: I'm not expecting anyone. Are you expecting someone?

7 WOMAN: Maybe...

8 MOTHER: Who?

9 WOMAN: Someone who can help.

10 MOTHER: I don't need any help.

11 WOMAN: Are you sure?

1 MOTHER: I didn't ask for help.

2 WOMAN: Not in so many words...

3 MOTHER: I don't want any help –

4 WOMAN: - Well I do! / want help!

5 MOTHER: Bloody cheek!

(WOMAN PAUSES, EXASPERATED. A BEAT. THE
KNOCKING HAS STOPPED.)

6 WOMAN: They've gone.

7 MOTHER: Who?

8 WOMAN: Doesn't matter.

9 MOTHER: What are you looking for?

10 WOMAN: Keys.

11 MOTHER: I don't know where they are.

**FX: A JINGLE OF KEYS, AS MOTHER TAKES
SEVERAL BUNCHES OUT OF HER POCKET.**

12 MOTHER: (PROFFERS THEM TO WOMAN; A NEW THOUGHT)
Do you want these?

1 WOMAN: You had them? (BEAT) It's too late now.

FX: MOTHER STUFFS THEM BACK IN HER POCKET.

2 MOTHER: I'm keeping them safe.

3 WOMAN: You need to know where they are.

4 MOTHER: They're in a safe place.

5 WOMAN: You need to be able to find them, in case you have to
get out.

6 MOTHER: Who says I have to get out?

7 WOMAN: No-one.

8 MOTHER: I'm not going anywhere. They can take a running jump!

9 WOMAN: No, but if there were an emergency –

10 MOTHER: - What emergency?

11 WOMAN: I don't know. A fire or –

12 MOTHER: - Is there a fire?

13 WOMAN: No.

14 MOTHER: Well I think you're talking rubbish. (BEAT) Is the back
door locked?

- 1 WOMAN: Everything's locked. We're both locked in.
- 2 MOTHER: Or out.
- 3 WOMAN: Trapped.
- 4 MOTHER: Trapped, that's it.
- 5 WOMAN: Please, give me the keys.
- 6 MOTHER: (SINGS) "I will give you the keys of heaven
I will give you the keys of heaven
Madam, will you walk...?⁴"
- 7 WOMAN: (SINGS; LONG BURIED) "... Madam, will you talk?"
- 8 MOTHER: "Madam, will you walk and talk with me?"
- (WOMAN TAKES UP THE BATON OF THE NEXT
VERSE.)
- 9 WOMAN: "Though you give me the keys of heaven..."
- 10 MOTHER: "... Though you give me the keys of heaven..."
- 11 WOMAN: "Yet I will not walk – "
- 12 MOTHER: " – no, I will not talk..."
- 13 WOMAN: "No, I will not walk or talk with thee." (BEAT) You taught
me that song.

⁴ The Keys of Heaven (folk song): <http://www.joe-offer.com/folkinfo/songs/773.html>

1 MOTHER: No, you taught me –

2 WOMAN: - You taught me that song when I was a little girl.

3 MOTHER: How could I? I didn't know you. (BEAT) You taught me.

(A BEAT.)

4 WOMAN: Please. Give me the keys?

5 MOTHER: What for?

6 WOMAN: To open the door.

7 MOTHER: Why do you want to open the door?

8 WOMAN: To let the air in. I can't breathe.

9 MOTHER: Breathe from your diaphragm.

(SHE DEMONSTRATES.)

10 WOMAN: I want to get out.

11 MOTHER: Oh yes! That's your game.

12 WOMAN: What game?

13 MOTHER: You want to get me out of this house.

- 1 WOMAN: No –
- 2 MOTHER: - Yes! That's your motive. That's what it's all in aid of.
- 3 WOMAN: I don't have an ulterior motive! I'm just trying to help –
- 4 MOTHER: - Well you've got NO BUSINESS! I know your game,
don't think I don't. You want to pack me up, truss me
up, bundle me out, and go. But you can take a
RUNNING JUMP!

SCENE TITLE**THE NUMBER YOU WILL NEVER RING AGAIN**

**FX: THE LIMBO OF PSYCHOSIS. PHONES RING, ON
AND ON, INSISTENT: A CACOPHONY OF
DIFFERENT RING-TONES, OVERWHELMING,
FADING UP AND FADING OUT...**

- 1 WOMAN: This is the number I will never ring again. The only
 number I know by heart. This is my home number. But
 suddenly nobody's home.
- 2 MOTHER: Nobody's home. They've all gone and left me. I don't
 know what anyone's doing.
- 3 WOMAN: I called you every night, after News at Ten. We'd talk for
 hours...
- 4 MOTHER: That's nice. I wish I had someone here.
- 5 WOMAN: I'm here.
- 6 MOTHER: (DISTORTION, AS IF ANSAPHONE MESSAGE FROM
 A PAST TIME, PRE CARE HOME) Will you say cheerio
 to me before you go?
- 7 WOMAN: I'm not going anywhere.
- 8 MOTHER: (ANSAPHONE) Please? Ring me before you go.
- 9 WOMAN: I'll never leave you.

1 MOTHER: (ANSAPHONE) I'm very upset to think you'll be going
away with unpleasant memories of me...

2 WOMAN: Can't you hear me?

3 MOTHER: (ANSAPHONE) Nobody's speaking to me!

4 WOMAN: I'm still here –

5 MOTHER: (ANSAPHONE) - It's all very strange and creepy. I
never hear from anyone now.

6 WOMAN: We had a lifetime of talking. And now –

7 MOTHER: (NORMAL ACOUSTIC) - The gap –

8 WOMAN: - The pause –

9 MOTHER: - The - - - -

10 WOMAN: Fracture.

 (A BEAT.)

11 MOTHER: You don't listen to me any more.

12 WOMAN: You can't hear me.

13 MOTHER: You have to come to me.

14 WOMAN: I'm trying! But I can't let go –

- 1 MOTHER: (ANSAPHONE) - Just let me know where you're going.
That's the only thing I ask.
- 2 WOMAN: I'm not going anywhere. Don't forget me.
- 3 MOTHER: Don't forget me.
- 4 WOMAN: I won't forget you.
- 5 MOTHER: (ANSAPHONE) I will *a/ways* love you. Whatever you
may think.
- 6 WOMAN: We were always talking...
- 7 MOTHER: ... After News at Ten.
- 8 WOMAN: Yes!

**FX: A BRIGHTER, MORE "NORMAL", COSY,
DOMESTIC SOUND FROM THIS POINT: THE LIVING
ROOM OF MOTHER'S HOUSE IN HAPPIER TIMES -
THE KIND OF PHONE GOSSIP THEY SHARED IN
THE REAL WORLD.**

- 9 MOTHER: The phone would ring –
- 10 WOMAN: - "It's me", I would say. And you would know who it was.
- 11 MOTHER: What do you take me for? Of course I know who you
are!

1 WOMAN: We'd have a good long natter –

2 MOTHER: - What this little dog's done today!

**FX: MOTHER EATS A BISCUIT AND DRINKS TEA
DURING THIS CONVERSATION.**

3 WOMAN: What did you buy in town?

4 MOTHER: A bright blue top. In Marks, but I might take it back. Do you know what they've done in the High Street?

5 WOMAN: No? Go on, what have they done?

6 MOTHER: Pedestrianisation!

7 WOMAN: What are they thinking of?

8 MOTHER: It'll be full of gangs.

9 WOMAN: Full of packs –

10 MOTHER: - Roaming the streets at night.

11 WOMAN: Stag nights –

12 MOTHER: - Hen dos! You should see what the girls are wearing!

13 WOMAN: And what's that little chap up to?

14 MOTHER: Oh, he's been really cheeky today! Barking at leaves in the garden.

- 1 WOMAN: Chasing squirrels, I bet? And what's the weather been like?
- 2 MOTHER: Baking - !
- 3 WOMAN: - pouring –
- 4 MOTHER: - Blowing up a gale. Howling!
- 5 WOMAN: Foggy on the road. They say there might be snow –
- 6 MOTHER: - You be careful now!
- 7 WOMAN: I am.
- 8 MOTHER: Ring me when you get in.
- 9 WOMAN: I always do, don't I?
- 10 MOTHER: And when are you coming back - ?
- 11 WOMAN: - Soon. We'll have a good long natter –
- 12 MOTHER: - in our nighties –
- 13 WOMAN: - letting it all hang out –
- 14 MOTHER: - sitting up late –
- 15 WOMAN: - with a nice cup of tea –

- 1 MOTHER: - strong; skimmed milk –
- 2 WOMAN: - no sugar –
- 3 MOTHER: - watching the telly –
- 4 WOMAN: - in our own home -
- 5 MOTHER: - not “you” –
- 6 WOMAN: - or “I” –
- 7 WOMAN/
MOTHER (UNISON) Just “us”.

SCENE TITLE HAIR

**FX: ACOUSTICALLY (AND LITERALLY), WE ARE IN
THE CARE HOME ROOM.**

(MOTHER IMAGINES HERSELF TO BE IN FRONT OF
THE MIRROR IN THE OLD HOUSE, FROM SCENE 3.)

- 1 MOTHER: I must do something about this hair!
- 2 WOMAN: Shall I make an appointment for you?
- 3 MOTHER: I'll do it in my own time.
- 4 WOMAN: You used to take me with you.
- 5 MOTHER: Did I? Take you? Where?
- 6 WOMAN: To the salon...

**FX: EASY LISTENING MUSIC FADES IN –
SOMETHING FROM THE 1970S⁵. THE GENTLE
DRONE OF HAIRDRYERS: WE ARE IN A 1970S
PROVINCIAL HAIR SALON...**

⁵ E.g. Chicago: 'If You Leave Me Now'.

- 1 MOTHER: What smell?
- 2 WOMAN: Elnett and perm lotion: the secret smell of “grown up”.
Perfume on a wet day. Little bottles of mauve and blue
rinse...
- 3 MOTHER: I really need a tint.
- 4 WOMAN: All the rituals we shared: the girl, gowning you up,
draping a towel around you; mixing the sticky dark tint...
Tang of ammonia that made my nose twitch. Alchemy
in a small bowl. And you'd be there at the mirror, all
gowned up in black; and she'd start to paint it on.
Molten pitch, staining its way up your temples...
- 5 MOTHER: And what are you doing?
- 6 WOMAN: Watching. Listening. You never stopped; you were the
talker then...
- 7 MOTHER: They'd bring you a nice cup of tea -
- 8 WOMAN: - And a magazine: Woman and Home...
- 9 MOTHER: Woman's Own, Woman's Journal –
- 10 WOMAN: - She –
- 11 MOTHER: - Family Circle –
- 12 MOTHER/: (ROLLED EYES) The Lady!
WOMAN

1 MOTHER: Tit-Bits!

2 WOMAN: (DANGEROUS) Cosmopolitan...

 (MOTHER TUTS IN DISAPPROVAL.)

3 WOMAN: I'd sneak that while you were under the dryer.

4 MOTHER: They'd pull the perspex helmet down, switch it on -

5 WOMAN: - and signal thumbs up: like mission control, Cape Canaveral.

6 MOTHER: I'd close my eyes and drift off...

7 WOMAN: And I'd read "The Cosmo Kama Sutra: One Hundred and One Positions To Try Out With Your Man".

8 MOTHER: I'm glad I didn't know that.

9 WOMAN: And then it would be my turn...

10 MOTHER: Promise me you'll never dye your hair?

11 WOMAN: What? I can't promise you that - !

12 MOTHER: - It's beautiful, just like silk. You won't go and dye it, will you?

13 WOMAN: I might. I fancy a bit of a change.

1 MOTHER: Promise me.

2 WOMAN: You dye yours.

3 MOTHER: Promise!

4 WOMAN: But one day, when it's gone grey - ?

5 MOTHER: - Just say you won't dye your hair?

(WOMAN STAYS TIGHT-LIPPED. A BEAT.)

**FX: MUSIC ABRUPTLY STOPS. THE SALON HAS
GONE. WE'RE BACK IN THE ACOUSTIC OF
MOTHER'S OLD HOUSE - MOVING THROUGH THE
ROOMS, FRACTIOUS.**

6 MOTHER: Oh well. If that's how you're going to behave...

(A SENSE OF MOTION: MOTHER WITHDRAWING
PHYSICALLY, OFFENDED; WOMAN PURSUING HER,
TRADUCED...)

7 WOMAN: Why is it so important?

8 MOTHER: Beautiful natural hair. You don't want to ruin that.

9 WOMAN: It's not who I am!

10 MOTHER: People change –

11 WOMAN: - It's just a colour of hair.

1 MOTHER: You don't want to ruin yourself.

2 WOMAN: It's just a different look. You did it –

3 MOTHER: - to stay the same. Not to change myself.

4 WOMAN: And why is that wrong? Why am I not allowed?

(MOTHER DOES NOT ANSWER. SHE'S GONE.)

SCENE TITLE **THE ATTIC**

FX: CARE HOME ROOM ACOUSTIC.

1 WOMAN: I've been clearing out the attic.

2 MOTHER: What's up in the attic?

3 WOMAN: A navy blue taffeta dress. It was yours. An evening dress...

4 MOTHER: I wore an evening dress - ?

5 WOMAN: - To sing. Long before I was born.

6 MOTHER: I don't know about that.

7 WOMAN: There are pictures of you in that dress. And gold lamé, white satin, black velvet...

8 MOTHER: ... Black lamé, gold satin, white velvet.

9 WOMAN: Photographs, black and white –

10 MOTHER: - Then how do you know all the colours?

(A BEAT.)

11 WOMAN: How do I - ?

1 MOTHER: - Know. The colours.

2 WOMAN: (BEAT) They're in the photographs.

3 MOTHER: Black and white, you said. So where are navy and gold?

(A BEAT.)

4 WOMAN: It was in the attic. The dress in the photographs.

5 MOTHER: But how do you know? How do you know about gold?

6 WOMAN: I must have... imagined. The colours, from what you told me.

7 MOTHER: Me?

8 WOMAN: Yes.

9 MOTHER: How would I know?

10 WOMAN: You told me about the gold dress. The woman on the West Shore who made it specially for you. Your mother took you there.

11 MOTHER: Where is she now? My mother?

12 WOMAN: The dress in the other photo – I always knew it as gold...

13 MOTHER: What have you DONE WITH MY MOTHER?

(A BEAT. WOMAN KNOWS SHE CAN'T ANSWER THAT.)

1 WOMAN: Shall I put the music on? The songs you used to sing?

2 MOTHER: I don't sing any songs.

3 WOMAN: Not now, but then; just listen –

4 MOTHER: - I don't want to sing any songs.

(A BEAT. THE SILENCE LIES HEAVY.)

5 WOMAN: Can you guess what else I found?

(A DUBIOUS LOOK FROM MOTHER.)

6 WOMAN: Bluebells...?

7 MOTHER: ... In the attic?

8 WOMAN: The tea-set with bluebells! The one you thought had been lost.

9 MOTHER: Did I? Think that?

10 WOMAN: You often complained about it. Thought someone had had it away. (BEAT) The bluebell tea-set?

11 MOTHER: I don't know about bluebells. Freesias, that's what I carried.

- 1 WOMAN: When?
- 2 MOTHER: On my wedding day.
- 3 WOMAN: I found your wedding dress.
- 4 MOTHER: That's what you wore - ?
- 5 WOMAN: - Not me.
- 6 MOTHER: A funny sort of a costume!
- 7 WOMAN: It's *your* dress! Kept pristine in a box – all these years in
the attic.
- 8 MOTHER: Have I seen you in it?
- 9 WOMAN: It wouldn't fit me.
- 10 MOTHER: Then why did you get it? Stupid!
- 11 WOMAN: A *wedding* dress. What does it mean?
- 12 MOTHER: You didn't invite me to your wedding!
- 13 WOMAN: I've never been married. You know that.
- 14 MOTHER: Well, come to that, neither have I.

(A LOOK FROM WOMAN. A BEAT.)

FX: SHIFT INTO REVERIE. WE'RE IN THE ATTIC IN
MOTHER'S HOUSE - AND THEN IN *HER* MOTHER'S
HOUSE, IN THE UNFOLDING MEMORY...

FRAGMENTS OF SOUND FROM THAT WORLD MAY
FADE IN AND OUT AS THE SCENE GOES ON: THE
SINGING OF THE COLD TAP, SIZZLING GRIDDLE,
BUBBLING HOB; BREEZE IN THE GARDEN,
DISTANT SEAGULLS; LITTLE DOG BARKS AND
LITTLE GIRL GIGGLES; MORECAMBE & WISE ON
TV, THE WAVE OF AUDIENCE LAUGHTER...

MAYBE SOME MOOD MUSIC UNDER, BUILDING TO
THE CRESCENDO OF WOMAN'S SPEECH.

FX: CAREFULLY UNWRAPPING A TEACUP STORED
IN A BOX IN THE LOFT, UNDER...

1 WOMAN V/O: I'm in the attic. I find a cup: white, with bluebells...

I look at this cup and see my grandmother. It's her cup
– best bone china, set aside for special occasions.

I see her face, wind-tanned, brown as saddle-leather;
blue eyes smiling, how she'd go weak with laughter...

I see her in her kitchen, in her house by the sea; always
in the kitchen, baking; Victoria sponge, apple pie, and
scones... Blue lino on the floor, the rubbery smell,
metallic tang of water from the cold tap... Her collection
of cacti on the windowsill, in the seashell pots you
made... Potato cakes sizzling on the griddle for tea...

1 WOMAN: I see the rock path up the back garden, where she'd
send me out to pick mint... "Make the mint sauce, will
you, cariad?", and I'd take pride in doing that...

Windfall apples – Russets, Bramleys, Cox's Pippins – I'd
collect for the seaside donkeys...

I see steam on the kitchen windows, when she had all
the pans on the go: carrots, potatoes, and cabbage...
roast lamb in the oven...

I see a big bowl of Brussels sprouts that I'm helping to
prepare; crossing the tops and tails, as she taught me;
table set for Christmas in the rarely-honoured dining
room... The gate-legged dark oak table, polished up
with beeswax, unfolded specially for the day; white
tablecloth and napkins, silver, and cut glass...

I see turkey salad for supper with crispy fried potatoes;
pickled onions, piccalilli; sticky boxed dates; trifle,
Christmas pudding, cold apple pie and cream...

2 I see Daddy – both of them, yours and mine; the little
dog jumping up, barking with excitement; all of us there,
curtains drawn, roasting chestnuts on the fire, laughing
at some rubbish on TV; I see our family...

I look at this cup... I look at this cup...

FX: MOOD MUSIC BUILDS TO CRESCENDO.

1 I look at this cup and see love.

(A BEAT)

FX: NO MUSIC. WE ARE BACK IN THE CARE HOME ROOM.

2 MOTHER: What cup?

3 WOMAN: This cup. White, with bluebells.

FX: WOMAN PASSES THE CUP TO MOTHER

What do you see?

(A BEAT. MOTHER SAYS NOTHING.)

What do you see?

4 MOTHER: (BEAT) A cup.

SCENE TITLE**THE WOMAN IN THE ROOM**

FX: FLAT ACOUSTIC. WE ARE IN THE CARE HOME

ROOM: SEPARATE INTERNAL MONOLOGUES.

1 MOTHER: (VO: INTERNAL) She's a nuisance, that's what she is. This bloody woman in the room. Coming here, making herself at home, as if I've invited her in. Who does she think she is?

I'm not going to make a big fuss. She can sit there if she wants to. I've got nothing to say. Close my eyes and drift off... Or pretend to – same effect.

She says, "Do you want the TV on?" I can tell she wants it, really. So I nod, "I'm easy, you choose". And she'll put some rubbish on; some ghastly jumble of noise... I just want to be left in peace. But she comes with her expectations...

What does she want from me? Sitting there, watching?

2 She won't tell me anything. Where are my parents? That's what I want to know. She says they've "gone"; but I don't believe her. Why would they go without me? She's hiding something. Up to no good. But I don't let her see – I'm on to her, know her game.

She can sit there. I've got nothing to say.

- 1 WOMAN: (VO: INTERNAL) I wish I had something to say. So much... But it's all too huge. You can't launch into it cold.
- She used to ask me about the journey. How long did it take to get here? Was there much traffic on the road? A whole life, reduced to that. And now even that much has gone. She has no idea of the journey. How hard I struggle to reach her...
- 2 MOTHER V/O: Sometimes she looks familiar. From a photograph, maybe... I have an idea she's smirking, which is a bit of a bloody damn cheek!
- 3 WOMAN V/O: I look at her and wonder – how can she be the same and yet not? Eyes closed, dozing, she could be her old self, at home in front of the telly. I half think then that she'll wake and look at me with her old eyes, smile her old smile, and speak to me as my real self. All this will be just a nightmare – a sick dream in a cold fever. But she wakes and sees a stranger. So a stranger is what I am.
- 4 MOTHER V/O: She has a supercilious air. Bossy. I don't like that. Always trying to interfere!
- 5 WOMAN V/O: I feel I need to do something, but there's almost nothing to do. I bring flowers. Pink and yellow; orange, mauve, and cerise. Trim them, put them in water, arrange them in a vase...
- 6 MOTHER V/O: She fiddles. Stop fiddling! Why can't she just sit still?

- 1 WOMAN V/O: I want her to know that I try. A gesture. An image. A thought that might get through...
- 2 MOTHER V/O: Whatever she wants, I can't give it. It's really not fair to ask.
- 3 WOMAN V/O: I know she can't come back. But I can't go there either. Where do I belong?
- 4 MOTHER V/O: I just want my mother...
- 5 WOMAN V/O: ... I just want my mother.

(BEAT)

- 6 MOTHER V/O: She puts the television on.
- 7 WOMAN V/O: Or music. Sometimes music is better.
- 8 MOTHER V/O: No pictures. I can't be doing with them.

(FX: MUSIC PLAYS: AN ARIA FOR FEMALE VOICE⁶.)

- 9 WOMAN V/O: The singer speaks for us. We have no words to share.

I tried not to dye my hair. Though I wanted to go bright red. I wanted to be loud and noticed, to shout out "here I am!". But I kept it the same for her – so I wouldn't look too different...

⁶ Kathleen Ferrier: What is Life? – Gluck, Orpheus & Eurydice.

- 1 MOTHER V/O: Sometimes she looks familiar – from a photograph,
maybe?
- 2 WOMAN V/O: Sometimes I shock myself, when I come into this room.
I just can't make her out. "Where is she?", I think. And I
panic that she's gone. But then I look a bit closer, and
finally I see... She's been there all the time. The same.
And yet so different. A stranger in her image.
- 3 MOTHER V/O: This is my moment. Nothing in front and nothing behind.
Just this room.
- 4 WOMAN V/O: Sometimes I hate this room, for trapping the two of us in
it.
- 5 MOTHER V/O: I don't like this room.
- 6 WOMAN V/O: I hate it for being our only common ground. All our
horizons, shrunk down into this!
- 7 MOTHER V/O: It's not my room. I don't know why I'm here.
- 8 WOMAN V/O: A whole world, shrunk down into one street, one house,
one room, one chair, one bed, one touch, one... nothing.
- 9 MOTHER V/O: I just want to go home.
- 10 WOMAN V/O: I wish we could both go home.

FX: MUSIC FADES OUT

(INTERNAL MONOLOGUES MOVE INTO DIALOGUE.)

- 1 MOTHER: Please, give me the keys?
- 2 WOMAN: I can't.
- 3 MOTHER: I want to get out of this room!
- 4 WOMAN: We can't.
- 5 MOTHER: You can't keep me in here! I've had a bellyful of you!
- 6 WOMAN: That makes two of us then.
- 7 MOTHER: Well go on: bugger off!
- 8 WOMAN: I will!
- 9 MOTHER: You don't know – what goes on when you're not here.
- 10 WOMAN: I've got a pretty good idea. I know more than you think.
- 11 MOTHER: Then give me the bloody keys!
- 12 WOMAN: I haven't got them! It's you who hid them away!

(MOTHER LOOKS AT HER FEARFUL, MISTRUSTFUL.
A LONG BEAT.)

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to upset you. I know it's not
your fault.

- 13 MOTHER: Why am I in this room?

1 WOMAN: To keep you safe.

2 MOTHER: What for?

3 WOMAN: You need a safe place.

4 MOTHER: Why?

5 WOMAN: The world's too big for you now.

(MOTHER EXCLAIMS IN DISGUST. A BEAT. WE
RETURN TO SEPARATE INTERNAL MONOLOGUES.)

6 WOMAN V/O: I put some music on. To fill the silence between us.

**FX: MUSIC FADES BACK UP. IT PLAYS ON UNDER
DIALOGUE TO THE END OF THE SCENE⁷.**

I'm just a woman in the room.

7 MOTHER V/O: Coming here, making herself at home... Who does she
think she is?

8 WOMAN V/O: I wish I had something to say. But it's all too huge.

9 MOTHER V/O: She looks familiar. From a photograph, maybe. A
presence –

10 WOMAN V/O: - An absence.

⁷ Still Kathleen Ferrier, 'What is Life?'.

- 1 MOTHER V/O: Just waiting for me to die.
- 2 WOMAN V/O: “You’re just waiting for me to die”, she says. And it’s true. That’s right. I am.

**FX: A MOMENT OF SILENCE, TO REGISTER THE
IMPORT OF THIS ADMISSION.**

SCENE TITLE**SEASIDE**

FX: WAVES BREAKING ON SEASHORE.

1 MOTHER: Where are we now?

2 WOMAN: Just listen...

**FX: WE HEAR THE WIND AND WAVES; A BOAT
HORN; SEAGULLS ABOVE US.**

**A LIGHTER MOOD: OPENNESS. THE BAY OF A BIG
RESORT ON THE OPEN SEA.⁸**

(A BEAT.)

3 MOTHER: That's lovely. Peaceful.

4 WOMAN: We were happy here, weren't we?

5 MOTHER: A house by the sea...

6 WOMAN: ... Tang of salt in the air.

7 MOTHER: Sun on my face...

8 WOMAN: Oh, how you loved to sunbathe!

⁸ Llandudno: North Shore and Pier.

1 MOTHER: Can we have an ice-cream?

2 WOMAN: What kind would you like?

3 MOTHER: An oyster shell. Or a cornet –

4 WOMAN: - We'll have a nice cup of tea.

5 MOTHER: And chips!

(A BEAT.)

6 WOMAN: You bought me the ice-cream, when I was a little girl.
Now I buy it for you...

7 MOTHER: Aren't I a lucky girl?

8 WOMAN: Shall we go for a walk on the pier?

9 MOTHER: I can't picture it now...

10 WOMAN: Let's walk along to the end.

11 MOTHER: What is there, at the end?

12 WOMAN: The pavilion. Where you sang.

13 MOTHER: I sang?

14 WOMAN: In a navy taffeta dress...

- 1 MOTHER: 'Seaside Nights'⁹? I sang on the radio –
- 2 WOMAN: - Yes!
- 3 MOTHER: I don't know what I sang...
- 4 WOMAN: Mozart, Gershwin, Novello; a song called 'The Trout'¹⁰,
by Schubert...
- 5 MOTHER: He played Schubert, yes. Played it on that cello.
- 6 WOMAN: Who? Played what on the cello - ?
- 7 MOTHER: - Our headmaster. We went on our bikes, you see... all
the way to Southport...
- 8 WOMAN: When?
- 9 MOTHER: When we'd done our exams. All bunked off, the whole
gang, and went on our bikes to Southport. And there he
was, in his front garden. He saw us all ride past. She
went potty, my mother!
- 10 WOMAN: Because you'd all got caught?
- 11 MOTHER: Because there'd been an air-raid, and they didn't know
where I was.
- 12 WOMAN: And what about the head?

⁹ Popular weekly show on the BBC Light Programme from 1940s-60s. Often visited Llandudno, where the resident conductor was John Morava: <http://genome.ch.bbc.co.uk/9197f13cd5c3436b8e1e39dc07a77552>.

¹⁰ As per opening soundscape/montage.

1 MOTHER: He played the cello, you know.

2 WOMAN: Not in his front garden - ?

3 MOTHER: - Garden? We rode to the sea!

FX: THEY LISTEN TO THE WIND AND THE WAVES.

SOUND MORPHS INTO THE REVERIE OF SCENE 1.

4 WOMAN: We had a garden by the sea, when I was a little girl.
You loved to sunbathe, anointed with olive oil...

5 MOTHER: I smothered myself in oil?

6 WOMAN: Your arms, brown as saddle-leather, rich mahogany –

7 MOTHER: - That doesn't sound very nice.

8 WOMAN: It was beautiful. Our life.

9 MOTHER: Just listen to the gulls...!

10 WOMAN: So free...

11 MOTHER: ... Hovering in the air...

12 WOMAN: Do you wish that you were a bird?

13 MOTHER: You and I, you mean?

14 WOMAN: You and I, yes; riding the wind...

- 1 MOTHER: ... Skimming the waves...
- 2 WOMAN: ... Watching the sunset together.
- 3 MOTHER: The tide comes in...
- 4 WOMAN: ... and the tide goes out...
- 5 MOTHER: ... sucking the sand along with it.
- 6 WOMAN: The tide goes out...
- 7 MOTHER: ... and the tide comes in...
- 8 WOMAN: ... throwing shingle back on the shore.
- 9 MOTHER: The tide comes in...
- 10 WOMAN: ... and the tide goes out...
- 11 MOTHER: ... leaving a different landscape under foot.
- 12 WOMAN: The tide comes...
- 13 MOTHER: ... the tide goes...
- 14 WOMAN: How do we keep our footing?
- 15 MOTHER: Listen to the wind...
- 16 WOMAN: I listen to the wind...

1 MOTHER: What does the wind say?

2 WOMAN: Ashes.

FX: SILENCE. MAYBE JUST THE WIND?

SCENE TITLE **HOME****FX: ACOUSTICS: CARE HOME ROOM.**

(AS PER PROLOGUE, THE TENOR OF A
THERAPEUTIC EXCHANGE.)

- 1 MOTHER: I want to go home.
- 2 WOMAN: Tell me about home. What does it feel like?
- 3 MOTHER: Warm. Egg custard, fresh from the oven; nutmeg
sprinkled on top. Meat and potato pie. On a Saturday,
when they've been out playing tennis.
- 4 WOMAN: Who?

**FX: SUBTLE ACOUSTIC CHANGE: GOING INTO
REVERIE – CHORLEY, LANCASHIRE, IN THE
1930S/40S. DISTANT SOUNDS OF SOCIAL TENNIS?**

- 5 MOTHER: My parents! Out from dawn till dusk, on the courts
behind our house...
- 6 WOMAN: And where are you?
- 7 MOTHER: Watching. Or no, maybe, in the house...? Yes. I'm at
the top of the stairs – singing, while they're out.
- 8 WOMAN: Singing? You remember that?

1 MOTHER: It echoes down the hall!

(SHE STRIKES A NOTE.)

FX: THE NOTE REVERBERATES...

2 WOMAN: What are you singing?

3 MOTHER: 'The Trout', by Schubert¹¹...

(SHE SINGS A FEW BARS.)

There's a woman next door, Amy Triffitt. Funny name, but true. She listens. She knocks on the door and says she's a singing teacher. "You've got a lovely little voice", she says. And I'm going to be a singer!

4 WOMAN: She teaches you?

5 MOTHER: I'm winning cups at all the festivals: Blackpool, Southport, Lytham St Anne's... They've asked me to sing on the radio – at the BBC.

6 WOMAN: In London?

7 MOTHER: Liverpool. The Radiant Rooms. A very imposing building! We go on the train, my mother and I...

¹¹ As before.

FX: HINT OF A BIG, BUSTLING RAILWAY STATION¹²
IN THE 1930S/40S: STEAM ENGINES, CARRIAGE
DOORS SLAMMING, CROWDS, WHISTLES...

- 1 MOTHER: I've got a lovely new blue coat – sky blue mohair, with a velvet collar like Princess Elizabeth. But somewhere on the way, I think I must have sat down in some chocolate, because when I get up, there it is all over my beautiful coat! It looks like – well, I don't have to say, I'm sure you can imagine...
- 2 WOMAN: Is she angry, your mother?
- 3 MOTHER: Angry? No, she's laughing, absolutely weak! But I could cry; well, I do...
- 4 WOMAN: Don't cry -
- 5 MOTHER: - But it's ruined! My beautiful new coat!
- 6 WOMAN: It doesn't matter. None of it matters now.
- 7 MOTHER: I want to go home.
- 8 WOMAN: So do I...

FX: BACK IN THE CARE HOME. THE REVERIE IS
BROKEN, MOTHER'S GRASP OF MEMORY
DISSOLVES. WOMAN STRUGGLES TO PULL HER
BACK INTO A MORE RECENT SHARED PAST IN
MOTHER'S HOUSE (AS PER SCENES 2/3)...

¹² E.g. Manchester Piccadilly/Liverpool Lime Street.

- 1 MOTHER: My mother's there. Victoria sponge, apple pie, and scones...
- 2 WOMAN: I see our house, *our* home. You're still there, waiting for me...
- 3 MOTHER: ... Waiting for me to come home.
- 4 WOMAN: I call you when I set off, and you've got the kettle on. You put the porch light on and open the door to greet me.
- 5 MOTHER: I open the door? Where?
- 6 WOMAN: I can see every room, exactly as we left it; all our lifetime of things.
- 7 MOTHER: What things?
- 8 WOMAN: It doesn't matter now.
- 9 MOTHER: What matters?
- 10 WOMAN: You and me. In our nighties –
- 11 MOTHER: - Letting it all hang out?
- 12 WOMAN: I can see it all; as if I could touch it, as if I could just walk in –
- 13 MOTHER: - Why don't you then?

1 WOMAN: It's not there any more...

2 MOTHER: The house?

3 WOMAN: The house is still there.

4 MOTHER: Then go –

5 WOMAN: - It's not our house.

6 MOTHER: But home?

7 WOMAN: Home is where you are. You're still there, waiting for me
–

8 MOTHER: - With a nice cup of tea?

9 WOMAN: Yes! Oh, yes.

10 MOTHER: And what am I doing?

11 WOMAN: You're just yourself. Going about your business.
Combing your hair at the mirror, when we're getting
ready to go out; a spritz of Chanel No 5, putting on pink
lipstick –

12 MOTHER: - Squirrels ate the pinks.

13 WOMAN: They did.

14 MOTHER: Cheeky little buggers!

- 1 WOMAN: I can see it all, just as you see yourself, standing at the
 top of those stairs –
- 2 MOTHER: - Singing.
- 3 WOMAN: Singing, yes, in a different “home”.
- 4 MOTHER: Are you there?
- 5 WOMAN: No.
- 6 MOTHER: I can’t seem to see you.
- 7 WOMAN: In my home, you are there; but in your home, I am not.
- 8 MOTHER: Why is that?
- 9 WOMAN: Maybe it’s my fault. It *is* still there? If I can only find the
 key... If I just believe that little bit more? Tell me about
 home!
- 10 MOTHER: What do you want to know?
- 11 WOMAN: What does it mean to you?
- 12 MOTHER: Everything. My whole life.
- 13 WOMAN: And how does it make you feel?
- 14 MOTHER: Safe.

SCENE TITLE**A LIFE ERASED**

(INTERIOR MONOLOGUE. AT TIMES A DIRECT – UNSPOKEN – ADDRESS TO MOTHER, AT OTHERS A PHILOSOPHICAL ENQUIRY OR PERSONAL SOUL-SEARCHING.)

1 WOMAN V/O: I want to talk about big things. My birthday, for example.

Not that anniversary ritual, forgotten date I forgive.

No.

The day of my birth. When you and I first met.

You used to tell me the story: how he drove you there in the snow; cried when he had to leave you (no dads in delivery then). Bed-socks, epidural, an Agatha Christie on the go. And the wonders of Twilight Sleep...

The hot sweet tea they brought you, when you recovered on the ward. Early morning journey home, in an ambulance full of old ladies – cooing at the baby in your arms.

You, the one person on this earth who has known me all my life. The first to hold me. The first, the only, to say you'd love me forever.

1 WOMAN: Where did that day go? What happened to that moment?

It's different for fathers, they say. A father can love, oh yes; but a *mother* is someone special. She carried you all that time; you were two, but one whole person; not "you" and "I", but "we".

"You never forget that instant bond of love". Isn't that what they say?

Well, I wouldn't know. I won't be anyone's mother.

2 And I don't remember meeting you. I came into this world a blank. How long does it take, to boot a memory up? Format your hard disk? One year? Two, or three?

I don't remember your face, the day that we first met. But *mothers* remember, don't they? The moment they saw their child?

(A BEAT)

I do know that you loved me.

But where did that love go?

How can you watch me weep and feel nothing?

I want to tell you that *I love you*, but how does that sound from a stranger? Just some woman in the room?

1 WOMAN: I reach out to hold your hand, but you flinch away from my touch.

How I wish I could step right back into the picture of our lives; just to be once again that sweet little girl, skipping up the path to meet you...

(A BEAT)

There are other “big things”, of course. Your wedding, my graduation, my father’s death... The dogs we buried, the home I’ve had to sell. And your parents - oh yes, your parents! – whose loss I can never explain.

But they belong to another world – not the two of us, in this room. That’s all that matters now. Names don’t matter; dates don’t matter; places have melted away.

2 But who do you love? Do you remember a daughter? Even if she’s not me? Or if you’ve never been married, has no daughter ever been born...?

So who is this woman in the room? This tired, this sad, this wasted middle-aged frump? Where is the sweet little girl, the pretty young woman in the fading photograph?

Sometimes you pay me a compliment or even say you love me. But then I hear you repeat those same few words to someone else. I realise you’re play-acting, just humouring that woman in the room.

1 WOMAN: How can I trust in that? How should I believe that any of it is real? That anything ever was?

Nothing, it turns out, is instinct. No umbilical cord of love. All that we know, we have learned; all that we've learned can be unlearned – returned to just a blank disk.

“It's not her”, they say, as if that makes it all right. But when does it stop being you? How do we know? Where's the line to be crossed?

2 “Stop hoping”, they say. “Put your hurt feelings aside. *It's not about you.*”

Well, sometimes I HATE YOU, do you know that? I HATE YOU, HATE YOU, HATE YOU! For doing this to me! For trapping me in this room. For taking the keys and locking me in!

But I'm not allowed to hate you. Because it's not your fault.

(A BEAT)

I dug up the bones of our dog. Oh yes!

Took him with me – when I sold the house. Couldn't leave him to be trampled on by strangers, cast away in a skip.

1 WOMAN: I told myself I did it for you. But you're past caring now.
I took him for myself. To have something to hold onto.
A relic of our lives.

Because everything else is gone. There's nothing
outside this room.

I hear myself speaking in your voice. Am I you now? Is
this where you exist? In my head and my heart, as you
slip away from this world...

You are still loved and needed. I am useless and alone.

Ashes to the wind, bones in the ground – the only sign
that you lived.

FX: MAYBE A HINT OF AUSTERE WIND, THEN
SILENCE? THE AURAL EQUIVALENT OF
TUMBLEWEED...

SCENE TITLE**THE QUESTION**

**FX: ACOUSTIC: CARE HOME ROOM. ALTHOUGH
WOMAN TRIES TO EVOKE THE SAME IMAGES, THE
SAME REVERIE AS IN SCENE 1, THIS TIME IT
DOESN'T WORK – SOUND DOESN'T COME BACK.**

(BEGINS AS A THERAPEUTIC EXCHANGE, AS PER
PROLOGUE; BUT WOMAN CANNOT REMAIN THE
NEUTRAL "COUNSELLOR" – HER OWN FEELINGS
INCREASINGLY CANNOT BE DENIED...)

1 WOMAN: When you look at me, what do you see?

(MOTHER SAYS NOTHING.)

Can you even see me?

2 MOTHER: Of course I can! You daft thing.

3 WOMAN: Then tell me what you see.

4 MOTHER: A woman. Woman or man...

5 WOMAN: Or man?

6 MOTHER: Woman, if you say so.

7 WOMAN: It's not for me to say. I want to know what you see.

1 MOTHER: A woman, then.

2 WOMAN: In a photograph?

FX: WOMAN SHOWS MOTHER A PHOTOGRAPH

3 MOTHER: Who are they?

4 WOMAN: Are they not familiar?

(NOTHING FROM MOTHER.)

(INDICATES) That's me.

5 MOTHER: Is it?

6 WOMAN: And that's you...

7 MOTHER: No.

FX: WOMAN PROFFERS ANOTHER PHOTOGRAPH...

8 WOMAN: How about this one? What does it make you feel?

(NO REACTION.)

Sweet little girl?

9 MOTHER: Yes.

10 WOMAN: Skipping up the path?

1 MOTHER: Sniffing a rose...

2 WOMAN: Skipping up the path to meet you.

3 MOTHER: I don't know these people.

4 WOMAN: They're still in there, somewhere.

5 MOTHER: Where?

6 WOMAN: In my head, if not in yours.

7 MOTHER: I don't know –

8 WOMAN: - They still exist. That moment still exists. Once it happened, it's in the air forever.

9 MOTHER: I don't know –

10 WOMAN: - / do! I'm in the garden, sniffing a rose; you come out in an apron –

11 MOTHER: - You remember that?

12 WOMAN: Yes! (BEAT) I recognise the picture...

13 MOTHER: But you don't really *remember*?

14 WOMAN: I was tiny! You were there. Grown up. It happened. It's in the picture. I'm in the garden, sniffing a rose; you come out in an apron –

1 MOTHER: You don't really remember.

2 WOMAN: *He takes the photograph –*

3 MOTHER: - Who?

4 WOMAN: Daddy. It's his point of view. There were three of us there together.

5 MOTHER: Where is he now?

6 WOMAN: He's gone. But you and I are still here. We still exist. That moment, that life exists.

7 MOTHER: I want to go.

8 WOMAN: Not yet.

9 MOTHER: I've had enough. I'm frightened.

10 WOMAN: I need you here. Don't go.

11 MOTHER: I want to go home.

12 WOMAN: So do I! Don't you know how much I want that? Who AM I? Tell me who I am?

(MOTHER STAYS SILENT.)

Come on, tell me who I am?

13 MOTHER: Don't you know?

- 1 WOMAN: I'm waiting for you to tell me.
- 2 MOTHER: You should know.
- 3 WOMAN: I want to hear it from you.
- (A BEAT.)
- Nothing? Is that all I am? Just nothing?
- 4 MOTHER: It's not fair of you to ask. You have to respect my world.
- 5 WOMAN: And who respects *my* world? Who gives a damn about me?
- 6 MOTHER: You have to take care of yourself.
- 7 WOMAN: I do. I've been doing it for years. But for pity's sake, I want – something! Why am I wrong to want something?
- 8 MOTHER: Because I can't give it any more.
- 9 WOMAN: So who do I complain to? Have it out with? Who the HELL CAN I BLAME?
- 10 MOTHER: Who am *I*? You tell me that. There's a big question for you.
- 11 WOMAN: I know you.
- 12 MOTHER: You think?

1 WOMAN: I've known you all my life.

2 MOTHER: Then tell me, if you're so clever: what you know about me!

3 WOMAN: You are... my heartbeat. My first breath. Blood that runs in my veins. The very beginning of me. My life is rooted in you. My past, your past: no-one else remembers. So who am I now? How do I know who I am?

4 MOTHER: You live in the moment. As I do.

5 WOMAN: What moment? This moment? This BLOODY – EMPTY – MOMENT?

(WOMAN SCREAMS: A REVERBERATING SCREAM OF RAGE AND ANGUISH FROM THE PIT OF THE STOMACH...

A BEAT. WOMAN CATCHES HER BREATH.)

So tell me about this moment. Tell me who I am.

6 MOTHER: You're a woman. In my room.

7 WOMAN: And?

8 MOTHER: A woman who seems familiar...

9 WOMAN: Yes?

1 MOTHER: I think you look nice in that dress.

2 WOMAN: Thank you!

3 MOTHER: I think you seem to be angry... And I don't know what I've done.

(A BEAT.)

4 WOMAN: I'm not really angry with you.

5 MOTHER: But angry - ?

6 WOMAN: - Yes. I just... want you to know me. Before it's too late. I want you to know who we are.

7 MOTHER: So tell me again?

8 WOMAN: You are... the imprint of your feet in an empty pair of shoes. The same crooked bunion as me. Sleeves rolled up on your favourite blue jacket...

**FX: UNDER THE FOLLOWING, A HINT OF THE
REVERIE OF SCENE 1 REAWAKENING: THE LITTLE
GIRL GIGGLING, DOG BARKING, BIRDS IN THE
GARDEN...**

9 MOTHER: ... A little girl laughing, a giggle... skipping up the path to meet me...

- 1 WOMAN: A wisp of Chanel No 5 on the silk scarf I gave you for Christmas...
- 2 MOTHER: Hair like silk... Skipping up the path...
- 3 WOMAN: A bundle of lipsticks in the fruit-bowl, different shades of pink...
- 4 MOTHER: ... Squirrels ate the pinks...
- 5 WOMAN: Your little hands on the piano...
- 6 MOTHER: Daddy's hands... Your strong hands...
- 7 WOMAN: ... Talking with your mouth full on the phone¹³; always a cake or a biscuit...
- 8 MOTHER: ... a well-stocked fridge, that's what you are...
- 9 WOMAN: Your voice on the phone: "it's me"...
- 10 MOTHER: ... Little girl giggling with the dog...
- 11 WOMAN: I'm still that little girl –
- 12 MOTHER: Inside...
- 13 WOMAN: - Inside, yes. That little girl loves her mum –
- 14 MOTHER: - Loves her mum –

¹³ Prefigured by action in Scene 3.

- 1 WOMAN: - her mum –
- 2 MOTHER: - my mother –
- 3 WOMAN: - that's what you are –
- 4 MOTHER: - that's what you are –
- 5 WOMAN: - who do you love?
- 6 MOTHER: Who do *you* love?
- 7 MOTHER/: My mother.
WOMAN

**FX: SILENCE. NO FX TO END, JUST THE VOICES,
CLOSE, INTERNAL.**

(A BEAT.)

- 8 MOTHER: You said you'd never forget me, but you have.
- 9 WOMAN: You said you'd love me forever, but you don't know who I am.
- 10 MOTHER: You left me.
- 11 WOMAN: You left me.
- 12 MOTHER/: I feel so alone.
WOMAN

1 WOMAN: You waited for me to be born.

2 MOTHER: You're waiting for me to die.

3 WOMAN: First breath...

4 MOTHER: ... Last breath.

5 WOMAN: You told me stories, taught me songs. Now I tell you the
 story of our lives.

6 MOTHER: The song has gone...

7 WOMAN: Not gone, just hidden.

8 MOTHER: All we have left –

9 WOMAN: - Is the gap –

10 MOTHER: - the pause –

11 WOMAN: - The - - - -

12 MOTHER: Fracture.

 (BEAT)

13 WOMAN: It's not the big things.

14 MOTHER: I don't mind the big things.

- 1 WOMAN: I don't miss the big things. But us, having a nice cup of
 tea –
- 2 MOTHER: - In our own home –
- 3 WOMAN: - in our nighties –
- 4 MOTHER: - at the hairdressers –
- 5 WOMAN: - on the beach –
- 6 MOTHER: - on the phone –
- 7 WOMAN: - having a laugh –
- 8 MOTHER: - at Christmas –
- 9 WOMAN: - messing around with the dog –
- 10 MOTHER: - mooching about in the shops –
- 11 WOMAN: - planting roses, sweet peas, and camellias –
- 12 MOTHER: - sunbathing in the garden –
- 13 WOMAN: - watching late-night TV –
- 14 MOTHER: - having a glass of red wine –
- 15 WOMAN: - telling you all my news –
- 16 MOTHER: - keeping our family secrets –

1 WOMAN: - That's what I miss.

2 MOTHER: That's what I miss.

3 WOMAN: That's what I miss –

4 MOTHER: - I miss –

5 WOMAN/: “Us”
MOTHER

(A BEAT)

6 WOMAN: In this moment, I am a forty-five-year-old woman. I am
not married. I have no children.

I remember the past; I imagine a future – I know the
difference between them.

I have spoken to no-one, but I know who I am.

It is Monday. Fifteen thirty-six.

I am a forty-five-year-old woman.

7 MOTHER: And I am a girl... Waiting.

(A BEAT OF SILENCE.)

FX: UNDER END TITLES, REPRISE ARIA FROM SCENE 6.¹⁴

¹⁴ Kathleen Ferrier: What is Life? – Gluck, Orpheus & Eurydice.