

# Audition Piece 1

Pages 1-10

Peter Kristin Trudi

3

## Characters

KRISTIN MILLER, in her sixties

PETER, her son, fortyish

TRUDI, his American fiancée, in her late twenties/early thirties

SIMON, her other son, in his late thirties

CLAIRE, his girlfriend, in her thirties

HUGH, an old friend of hers, in his sixties or early seventies

*The play takes place entirely in the kitchen of Kristin's cottage somewhere in the English countryside, in the present.*

## Thanks

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## ACT ONE

### Scene One

*The kitchen of KRISTIN's cottage. Impressive, chaotic, eclectic – like its owner. Full of interesting and beautiful objects. The space is dominated by a large dining table.*

KRISTIN is standing on one side of the room, PETER and TRUDI are on the other side, by the door. They have just arrived. They have two bags with them – an overnight travel bag and a large plastic one.

PETER. Mother.

KRISTIN. Darling.

PETER. We're early.

KRISTIN. You are.

PETER. No traffic.

KRISTIN. It's fine.

PETER. And Trudi wanted to see it before the sun went down.

KRISTIN. Did she?

TRUDI. The countryside is so beautiful.

KRISTIN. As long as you don't mind me in my dressing gown.

*Pause. PETER and TRUDI put the bags down.*

PETER. Mum, this is Trudi.

KRISTIN. Hello, Trudi.

TRUDI. Hi, Mrs Miller.

KRISTIN. Kristin.

TRUDI. Kristin.

KRISTIN. Welcome to my house.

TRUDI. I've heard so much about you.

KRISTIN. Have you?

TRUDI. And I've read your work.

KRISTIN. What a pretty name you have, Trudi.

TRUDI. Thank you.

KRISTIN. It's so American.

TRUDI. I know.

KRISTIN. Like Disneyland.

TRUDI. Yes.

KRISTIN. Or Coca-Cola.

*A slight pause.*

We have a bit of a crisis on our hands.

PETER. What kind of crisis?

KRISTIN. I need you to look at the oven.

PETER. The oven?

KRISTIN. It just doesn't feel to me like it's getting hot enough.

PETER. Have you got something in there now?

KRISTIN. Chicken.

TRUDI. Okay.

PETER. I thought I told you Trudi was a vegetarian.

KRISTIN. There's potatoes. And vegetables, of course.

TRUDI. I love potatoes.

KRISTIN. But I can't remember you telling me she was a vegetarian.

TRUDI. Really, Kristin, it's fine.

*PETER opens the oven.*

PETER. It's not that hot.

KRISTIN. And I've put it on full.

PETER. What time is it?

TRUDI. Just turned six.

KRISTIN. I mean, we won't be eating for at least another hour so maybe -

PETER. It doesn't feel that hot in there.

KRISTIN. Can you look at it?

PETER. Look at it?

KRISTIN. I mean, check the electrics, that kind of thing. Might be a switch.

PETER. It's not a switch, and no, I can't look at it. I mean, I wouldn't know where to start. You need an electrician.

KRISTIN. The irony of it. I mean, tonight of all bloody nights. I wanted everything to be -

PETER. What's your contingency plan?

KRISTIN. Contingency plan?

PETER. I mean, if it doesn't get any hotter. Pasta, or something?

KRISTIN. The hobs seem to have gone as well. I tried them earlier. I was thinking I could poach it or something. As a last resort. Cut it up and fry it.

PETER. Fry the chicken?

KRISTIN. But the hobs seem to have gone as well. The whole damn thing.

PETER. So what do we do?

KRISTIN. I could drive it over to Phil and Lou's. Borrow their oven.

PETER. That's twenty miles away.

KRISTIN. I know.

PETER. You can't be driving up and down the motorway with a chicken in the back seat.

KRISTIN. Or we could just have a cold meal. I'm sure I could be inventive. Forage for food in the cupboards, you know. Look for things.

PETER. Look for things?

KRISTIN (*looking in the cupboard*). There's anchovies, nuts.

PETER. Nuts?

KRISTIN. I have a cos lettuce in the fridge.

PETER. We're not bloody squirrels.

KRISTIN. Make a salad, you know.

PETER. Anchovy nut salad?

KRISTIN. Be inventive is what I mean.

TRUDI. I love salads.

KRISTIN. It's still early. It'll probably warm up.

PETER. Unlikely.

KRISTIN. We won't be eating for another hour.

PETER. It's broken.

KRISTIN. So in the meantime let's just try and be positive, shall we?

PETER. We'll try.

KRISTIN. And I'm sure you didn't tell me Trudi was a vegetarian.

PETER. My version of events against yours.

*A slightly awkward pause.*

KRISTIN. I was just about to have some tea.

PETER. Okay.

KRISTIN. But I think, under the circumstances, a glass of wine would be more appropriate.

TRUDI. That would be lovely.

KRISTIN. Good.

PETER. I'll do it.

*PETER gets three glasses out of a cupboard and a bottle of wine out of the fridge. It is already uncorked – maybe KRISTIN has had a glass before they arrived.*

TRUDI (*remembering*). Oh, happy birthday.

PETER. Of course.

KRISTIN. Thank you.

TRUDI. Shall we...?

PETER. What?

TRUDI. You know...

PETER. Oh.

TRUDI. Should we...?

PETER. Oh, that.

TRUDI. We've brought you something.

PETER. Maybe we should wait.

TRUDI. Or you could open it now.

*She opens the plastic bag she's brought with her and takes out quite a large, strangely shaped object which is wrapped in paper.*

KRISTIN. My goodness.

TRUDI. Happy birthday.

KRISTIN. Well, it isn't a book.

TRUDI. It's from somewhere far away.

KRISTIN. How exciting.

TRUDI. I hope you like it.

KRISTIN. Shall I open it now?

PETER. Go on then.

KRISTIN. All right.

*She starts to unwrap it. PETER has poured the three glasses of wine.*

TRUDI. We kind of chose it together.

PETER. Trudi chose it.

TRUDI. I thought it was very, very beautiful.

PETER. She sort of fell in love with it.

TRUDI. And I said to Peter, 'Maybe your mother will love it too.' I knew it was kind of risky but –

PETER. But we took the chance.

TRUDI. And we really hope you like it.

KRISTIN *has taken the paper off and the object is revealed – an African tribal mask. It is beautiful and disturbing the way these masks can often be – it has an exaggerated long face and a very broad forehead. PETER has handed TRUDI her glass of wine but holds onto KRISTIN's because she is holding the mask.*

KRISTIN. A mask.

TRUDI. Yes.

KRISTIN. An African mask.

PETER. It's from Liberia.

TRUDI. When Peter was there and I went with him. He was working all day and I was stuck in the hotel watching CNN.

KRISTIN. A tribal mask.

TRUDI. I was kind of nervous of going out on my own.

KRISTIN. It's quite something.

TRUDI. We were in Monrovia.

PETER. The capital.

TRUDI. But there's only so much Larry King you can watch.

So Peter was out all day with the people from the bank, meeting with all these guys from the Government. And I got bored. So I ventured out.

PETER. Not on your own.

TRUDI. With this guy from my hotel who was like my bodyguard or something. Peter arranged it. It was crazy.

KRISTIN. A bodyguard?

TRUDI. And we just walked around this marketplace and then this woman suddenly came up to me. She was very, very beautiful and quite young but when she opened her mouth I noticed she had no teeth. I mean, not a single tooth. It was kind of freaky. Anyway, she grabbed me by the arm and asked me to stay there and she ran into her house and then came out with this mask and said that she would sell it to me. And I kind of fell in love with it.

PETER. And the next day she took me over and showed it to me and persuaded me to buy it.

TRUDI. For you. Because I knew you liked beautiful objects of art. And of course, it's the real thing, what I mean is, it's not like the ones they sell at the airport. It's the real thing.

*Pause as KRISTIN takes in the mask.*

I really hope you like it.

KRISTIN *continues to examine it.*

KRISTIN. It's a tribal mask.

TRUDI. Yes.

KRISTIN. It's definitely impressive.

TRUDI. Oh, I'm so glad you like it.



KRISTIN. But what's its significance?

TRUDI. Its...?

KRISTIN. Its significance, history, function, its life.

TRUDI. How do you mean?

KRISTIN. Which tribe does it belong to? Was it made to conjure rain out of the sky or to bring punishment to those who had transgressed?

TRUDI. I don't -

KRISTIN. Did the person who wore it dance a dance of delirium so as to be taken over by the spirit of an ancestor or to pray for the crops?

TRUDI. I don't know -

KRISTIN. Or perhaps to bring famine and death to his enemies?

TRUDI. I really don't know. She didn't say.

KRISTIN. I suppose what I'm saying is that these objects - these strange, mysterious objects - are steeped in their own histories and we know very little of them, so to expatriate them in exchange for a few hundred dollars seems a little -

PETER. Mother.

KRISTIN. It's not that I'm superstitious because I'm not. I just suppose I wish I knew something of the context in which it was created. Because its main purpose was definitely not decorative. So for it to be here, in this house, as a decorative object seems to be... how can I put this... disrespectful, I suppose. Both of it and of the artist who created it.

PETER *gives her a look*.

But thank you. It's very kind.

TRUDI. I just thought it was beautiful.

KRISTIN. It is. It is. It is.

TRUDI. And I thought that -

KRISTIN. Somewhere in my study I have a book on African tribal art. We'll have a look later. See if there's any point of reference. Not my area of expertise, I'm afraid. So we'll have a look at the book.

TRUDI. That would be good.

KRISTIN. But thank you.

TRUDI. Happy birthday.

*Pause. KRISTIN places the mask down on one of the kitchen counters somewhat awkwardly as if she is uncomfortable with it. It stares out at them for the rest of the evening.*

PETER *hands her the glass of wine*.  
I was wondering...

KRISTIN. Yes?

TRUDI. I need to powder my nose.

KRISTIN. How sweet. Through the door on your right.

TRUDI. Thank you.

*TRUDI leaves the room. A short pause. KRISTIN takes some napkins out of a drawer and starts to fold them.*

KRISTIN. She's pretty. In a North American kind of way. Wholesome.

PETER. Be nice to her.

KRISTIN. I'm not an ogress, my darling. I won't have her on toast.

PETER. I think this is it.

KRISTIN. She's definitely the right age.

PETER. What do you mean?

KRISTIN. You know. Children.

PETER. For fuck's sake.

ADDICTION Piece 2 pp. 16-18

16 APOLOGIA

Peter Trudi

PETER. I'll do it now.

KRISTIN. I don't like standing on that stool. My balance -

PETER. I'll do it.

KRISTIN. Back in a second.

*KRISTIN leaves the room. PETER walks over to TRUDI and puts his arms around her.*

PETER. What do you think?

TRUDI. She's amazing.

PETER. And?

TRUDI. She hates the mask.

PETER. No.

TRUDI. I thought she'd like it.

PETER. I don't think she hates it.

TRUDI. I really thought she'd like it.

PETER. Maybe she just needs time.

TRUDI. Time?

PETER. You know, to get used to it. It's that kind of thing, isn't it?

TRUDI. What kind of thing?

PETER. Kind of thing you need time for it to grow on you. She'll end up loving it. You'll see.

*Pause.*

TRUDI. Why does she have a picture of Marx in the bathroom?

PETER. She's an old commie. Having said that, poor old Karl used to hang over the stairs but was recently demoted to the downstairs loo.

TRUDI. She's very glamorous. Bohemian.

PETER. She's a bloody nightmare.

TRUDI. Don't say that.

ACT ONE, SCENE ONE

17

PETER. Opinionated, didactic, dictatorial.

TRUDI. I don't see that.

PETER. Okay.

*He kisses her.*

My brother's coming, hopefully.

TRUDI. I can't wait to meet him.

PETER. He's been having a rough time.

TRUDI. You said.

PETER. As usual.

TRUDI. How do you mean?

PETER. Things just never seem to stick.

TRUDI. Stick?

PETER. They never have.

TRUDI. Poor Simon.

PETER. He's been trying to write.

TRUDI. It must be difficult.

PETER. It is.

TRUDI. He sounds fragile.

PETER. And now...

TRUDI. What?

PETER. He feels broken, I suppose.

*Pause.*

I love you.

TRUDI. I love you too, Petey poo.

*Pause.*

Will we tell them before or after the meal?

PETER. Let's see.

TRUDI. See what?

PETER. See how it all goes.

TRUDI. I thought after would be nice. Maybe dessert. And then we'll have champagne. Her second birthday present.

PETER. Maybe.

TRUDI. Please, Petey.

PETER. Okay. We'll see.

KRISTIN comes back, light bulb in hand.

KRISTIN. Here it is.

PETER. I'll do it now.

KRISTIN. Thank you, darling.

PETER. And I'll put our bag in the room.

KRISTIN. You're in the yellow one. I've left towels on the bed.

PETER takes the bulb from her, leaves the room and takes their overnight bag with him. KRISTIN goes to the oven, opens it.

Do you know, it feels like it's getting ever so slightly warmer.

TRUDI. That's hopeful.

KRISTIN goes and opens a cupboard and takes out some plates.

Can I help you with anything, Kristin?

KRISTIN. I suppose you could help me set the table. We'll need to eat something, whatever the outcome. The cutlery is in the second drawer from the right.

TRUDI. Sure.

*During the next few moments the two women set the table together - mats and plates with cutlery and then the glasses.*

KRISTIN. How did you meet my son, Trudi?

TRUDI. Oh, I thought he told you.

KRISTIN. Not a word.

TRUDI. We met at a prayer meeting.

KRISTIN. A what?

TRUDI. A prayer meeting. It was Peter's first. A mutual friend of ours brought him along. A girl called Sarah who works at the bank with him.

KRISTIN. A prayer meeting?

TRUDI. Well, that's what they call it, but actually it's more of a get-together. It's really quite social. I mean, there is a little prayer but mostly people talk about their lives. And have coffee and biscuits.

KRISTIN. How do you mean, a prayer meeting?

TRUDI. A Christian prayer meeting.

KRISTIN. A Christian prayer meeting?

TRUDI. Yes.

KRISTIN. So you're a Christian?

TRUDI. Most of the people who go to the Christian prayer meetings usually are.

KRISTIN. And Peter?

TRUDI. I'm sorry, I'm being facetious. But yes, Kristin, Jesus is an important part of my life.

KRISTIN. I'm happy for you. But what was my son doing there?

TRUDI. I just think he came to see what it was like.

KRISTIN. Good God.

TRUDI. Does that surprise you?

KRISTIN. He's just never really been into all that.



thought of patting yourself on the back for surviving this horrible adversity, you are in fact a bad, carnal creature, intemperate and steeped in original sin. As a matter of fact, you're also constantly reminded that in all likelihood you will end up in some crowded furnace being prodded by all sorts of objects including pitchforks and dog's genitalia whilst surrounded by flesh-eating goblins and assorted whores and perverts.

TRUDI. How disturbing.

KRISTIN. As a consolation, and some sort of carrot, you are also offered an alternative but this alternative is strange and foreign to you. These two-dimensional, alien faces stare down at you with absurd expressions, set against a gold backdrop. They don't look remotely human. They are supposed to promise some sort of an after-life but it all stretches your credibility because they reflect nothing familiar and gold is a colour reserved for the rich, those who have paid for a place in this hallowed heaven through patronage. That much you've sussed out. Brown is more your colour, the colour of the clumps of earth you dig out with your hands every day and the colour of your shit. Then suddenly one day this funny thing happens.

TRUDI. A funny thing?

KRISTIN. You are in a chapel and you kneel down to pray. This is an acquired habit, something you were taught to do from infancy and even though you do it with some feeling there is a question that accompanies that feeling and the question, which fills you with shame and fear, is whether the receptor of your prayer, in His might and power will be able, in all truth, to understand and commiserate with your petty needs, your small and humble pains. This thought brings you out of your meditation and your eyes drift upwards to just one part of a giant fresco that adorns the vaulted ceilings above you: an image of the Madonna cradling the body of her son in her arms. Your eyes move further up slowly, curiously, taking in the soft skin, the nape of the neck, the gentle contours of the face and then... then you actually stare at the face for the

first time and a chill runs up your spine and your whole view of life changes for ever. The Madonna's expression is one of anguish and loss, her mouth tilted slightly upwards as if she is asking the same questions that you are, her left hand touching her son's neck as if trying to stroke him back to life. You realise now that this face is not only recognisable – the face is yours. *Your* weeping eyes, *your* pale cheeks, *your* mouth that slightly curls with doubt. It's a mirror. That's all. But all of a sudden your whole perspective changes and maybe things become a little more bearable. Someone else has connected with you and you discover the meaning of the word *empathy*. With that you begin to realise that you are part of a collective experience. You will perhaps continue to pray but in a completely new way. Your prayers will be directed more to something within yourself, a nascent capability. And the knowledge that you carry that within you gives you a little strength. And a little reassurance.

TRUDI. That's beautiful.

KRISTIN. That's why I love Giotto, Trudi. That's humanism emerging from the religious matrix. Evolving. He was the first who did that. The vision, the power and the responsibility of the artist. The rest is superstition.

Pause.

TRUDI. Thank you for welcoming me to your home. You're an interesting and extraordinary woman.

KRISTIN. This hyperbole has to stop.

Pause.

TRUDI. And the book's title.

KRISTIN. The title?

TRUDI. *Apologia*.

KRISTIN. What about it?

TRUDI. It's one of those words. Like you think you know what it means but then maybe you don't. Or at least what you think it means is not exact. Not precise. *Apologia*.



KRISTIN. It means a formal, written defence of one's opinions or conduct.

TRUDI. Okay.

KRISTIN. Not to be confused with an apology.

*Pause.*

I'm off to have my shower.

PETER. Okay.

KRISTIN. Why don't you take Trudi to the bottom of the garden. Show her the magnolia tree and the view over the hills. It's the right hour of the day for it.

TRUDI. That sounds wonderful.

KRISTIN. And then I suppose we'll have to solve the problem of what exactly it is we're going to eat tonight in the unfortunate event of that fucking oven not getting its act together.

*She puts her wine glass down on one of the counters and makes a move towards the door. But just as she gets to it she turns around. She looks at PETER.*

Your face has changed.

PETER. My face?

KRISTIN. I was looking at you just now when the sun caught it.

PETER. How has my face changed?

KRISTIN. And I thought, 'He's not a boy any more.'

PETER. Congratulations for noticing.

KRISTIN. He's not a boy.

*Pause and for a minute she's lost in thought. And then she brings herself back.*

Welcome.

*She leaves the room.*

*Blackout.*

*Addition Piece 4: pp: 31-41*  
*Claire, Hugh, Trudi, Peter, Kristin*

Scene Two

*An hour later. PETER and TRUDI are standing in the kitchen with glasses of wine in hand. They have been joined by CLAIRE and HUGH who are also drinking. CLAIRE is wearing an expensive-looking, light-coloured dress.*

TRUDI. It really is so wonderful to meet you, Claire. I've heard so many things about you.

CLAIRE. You have?

HUGH. Your reputation precedes you, my dear.

TRUDI. About your career, I mean. Your acting.

CLAIRE. Oh, that.

TRUDI. It sounds so exciting.

CLAIRE. It has its moments.

TRUDI. Peter was saying you're quite famous.

CLAIRE. Comes with the territory, I'm afraid.

TRUDI. That's fun.

CLAIRE. I'm a very private person so it's kind of weird. I miss my anonymity.

HUGH. You do?

CLAIRE. Of course I enjoy being appreciated for my work.

TRUDI. Everybody does.

CLAIRE. But fame was never my objective.

HUGH. Of course not.

*A slight pause.*

TRUDI. So what's the soap opera about? Where's it set?

CLAIRE. Sorry?

TRUDI. Peter mentioned in the car that you were in a soap opera and I'm just wondering what it's about.

CLAIRE. Oh.

TRUDI. I mean, the kind of world it takes place in.

CLAIRE. Well, it's not really a soap opera.

HUGH. Isn't it?

CLAIRE. Not really. Not technically.

PETER. Oh, I'm sorry.

CLAIRE. It's more of a serialised drama that happens to follow the trajectories of various people's lives.

HUGH. *A what?*

CLAIRE. It's just a different genre is what I'm saying.

HUGH. A different genre?

CLAIRE. But it's about the lives of these people who work in an advertising agency.

HUGH. How thrilling.

CLAIRE. Their relationships, their works, their dilemmas. They're seriously good scripts.

TRUDI. I'm sure.

CLAIRE. Subtle and ambitious.

TRUDI. What a great job.

CLAIRE. They have depth.

*Pause.*

As a matter of fact, I had some good news yesterday.

TRUDI. You did?

CLAIRE. They've just renewed my contract for another year.

TRUDI. That's great.

PETER. Well done.

CLAIRE. Thanks, Peter.

HUGH. Who's a clever girl?

CLAIRE. I did have a moment. 'Do I really want to do this for the rest of my life?' I asked myself.

HUGH. And then you thought, 'Why ever not?'

CLAIRE. I've had to turn down quite a bit of theatre work.

HUGH. Have you?

CLAIRE. But I weighed everything up and decided that it's the right thing to do.

TRUDI. Congratulations.

CLAIRE. Because it really is quite classy.

*Pause. Suddenly HUGH spots the African mask.*

HUGH. Oh my God, what is that thing?

PETER. It's a mask -

TRUDI. That Peter and I bought Kristin -

HUGH. It's hideous.

TRUDI. As a gift.

HUGH. And beautiful at the same time. You know how some things have that ability to be hideous and beautiful at the same time? It's fascinating.

CLAIRE. Did you get it at that shop behind the British Museum?

TRUDI. No, it's the real thing.

CLAIRE. *Taboo* or something. Just off Russell Square.

PETER. It's from Africa.

TRUDI. Liberia. We bought it in Liberia.

CLAIRE. Coz it looks very much like the ones that they sell at that shop.

TRUDI. It's the real thing.

HUGH. Extraordinary.

*Pause.*

So how's our boy?

CLAIRE. Not good.

PETER. I heard.

TRUDI. Poor Simon.

CLAIRE (*slightly monitoring the volume of her voice*). Your mother's book.

PETER. What about it?

HUGH. The memoir?

CLAIRE. I think that's what she calls it.

TRUDI. She writes so beautifully.

CLAIRE. He finished it this morning.

PETER. Oh?

CLAIRE. He said the strangest thing after he'd read it.

PETER. He did?

CLAIRE. 'Why did she have children?' That's all he said.

HUGH. That is strange.

CLAIRE. He just threw it across the room and said, 'Why the fuck did she have children?'

KRISTIN *enters the room. She is showered and dressed.*

KRISTIN. Why did who have children?

HUGH (*thinking on his feet*). Anna Karenina.

KRISTIN. Anna Karenina?

CLAIRE. We were talking about books.

HUGH. Nineteenth-century Russian literature.

KRISTIN. I see.

CLAIRE. And I was just asking why Anna Karenina had bothered having children –

HUGH. If all she wanted was to have lots of sex.

CLAIRE. That's all.

KRISTIN. That's an interesting take on it.

*She kisses HUGH on the cheek.*

I've made a bed for you. In case you want to have a few and stay the night. You and Simon are in the green room, Claire.

HUGH. Thank you, darling. And by the way, we've ordered the Chinese.

KRISTIN. I'm embarrassed.

HUGH. Don't be. We're all rather relieved at having avoided death by poultry.

KRISTIN. It's not my fault the bloody thing conked out on me.

*Pause as she realises SIMON isn't there.*

Where's Simon?

CLAIRE. He might be joining us later.

KRISTIN. How do you mean, he might be joining us later?

CLAIRE. I came straight from the studio –

KRISTIN. I thought the whole point was that you were going to pick him up.

CLAIRE. I was. But then we spoke on the phone and –

KRISTIN. And what did he say?

CLAIRE. He said he couldn't make his mind up.

KRISTIN. Couldn't make his mind up?

CLAIRE. He was being monosyllabic.

KRISTIN. He's depressed.

CLAIRE. I know. I live with him, Kristin.

KRISTIN. So he's not coming?

CLAIRE. He said he might drive over later.

KRISTIN. Maybe we should try calling him.

CLAIRE. I just did. He didn't answer.

KRISTIN. As long as he's not drinking.

CLAIRE. I'm his girlfriend, Kristin.

KRISTIN. I was just under the impression that you were going to bring him here safely.

CLAIRE. Not his baby-sitter.

CLAIRE *takes a gift-wrapped box out of her bag and hands it to KRISTIN.*

But happy birthday anyway.

KRISTIN. You shouldn't have.

CLAIRE. Don't be ridiculous, it's your birthday.

KRISTIN. You really shouldn't have.

CLAIRE. It's just a little something. Oh, and I've brought a cake. Mango meringue. It's in the fridge.

HUGH. Mango meringue?

KRISTIN. I wasn't expecting anything.

HUGH. How delicious.

CLAIRE. Open it.

KRISTIN *starts to unwrap the present.*

TRUDI. I love watching people opening presents.

HUGH. I know what you mean. Especially that priceless moment when they have to conceal their disappointment behind an inane grin.

KRISTIN *has unwrapped the gift and an expression very similar to the one just described by HUGH is etched on her face as she reads the writing on the box.*

KRISTIN. 'TRANSFORMATIVE REJUVENATION.'

HUGH. Just in the nick of time.

CLAIRE. It really is a miracle worker. They only sell it at Selfridges. There's a waiting list. Works on the toughest skin. My mother swears by it.

KRISTIN. How kind.

CLAIRE. I was torn between that and the new Virginia Woolf biography. But I read a stinking review in the *Observer* so I got you the face cream instead.

KRISTIN. How thoughtful.

CLAIRE. Enjoy. And keep it in the fridge.

KRISTIN. You really shouldn't have.

HUGH *has gone to the fridge and he pops open a bottle of champagne.*

TRUDI. That's my favourite sound in the world.

HUGH. Good girl.

TRUDI. I always associate it with celebration. And I love celebrations.

*She goes over to where HUGH is standing and helps him with the champagne - holding up the glasses one by one for him to pour it into and then handing them out to everyone. As she does this, HUGH is holding up his glass in a toast. He camps it up.*



HUGH. And this evening we are celebrating the birthday of the legend that is Kristin Miller. Pioneer of Arts and Letters, Champion of the Voiceless and Redemptive Saviour of the Western World.

TRUDI. That's funny.

HUGH. We have lovingly watched you evolve over the years through your many varied personae and graduate to a place of peace and self-knowledge.

PETER. Have we?

HUGH. We have observed you whisk your way gracefully through your many incarnations – from placard-carrying waif to hammer-and-sickle-wielding Communist, from alarmingly coiffed Courtauld graduate to even more alarmingly coiffed hippy bride. In your pursuit of the common good you have offered yourself to as many causes as I've had social diseases. From the backstreets of Palestine to the NUM frontlines, and from the Parisian barricades to the tents of Greenham Common –

CLAIRE. Without a moisturiser in sight.

HUGH. You have made your presence felt most emphatically – PETER. In some quarters.

HUGH. And most importantly, with your passionate, often lambasted contribution to the traditionally male-dominated bastion of art history you have always done things – and this is where I get serious and maybe even a little teary-eyed – with a whole load of *heart*. Tonight, Kristin Miller, we salute you.

CLAIRE. We salute you.

*They all raise their glasses, though PETER is a little unenthusiastic.*

TRUDI. Happy birthday.

KRISTIN. Thank you, thank you, thank you. Very heartfelt if a little over-the-top.

HUGH is suddenly holding a small wrapped gift which he presents to her.

HUGH. And here is a little something to go with my well-rehearsed eulogy. Not quite as essential as Transformational Regeneration –

CLAIRE. Transformational Rejuvenation.

HUGH. But a gift nonetheless of rare and priceless significance. At least to me.

*He hands over the gift and she begins to unwrap it.*

I was clearing out some old shoeboxes in my study the other day. Found it in there amongst a heap of WRP pamphlets and a whole lot of yellowed news clippings. It made me laugh.

*She has unwrapped it and the object has revealed itself. It is a beautifully framed photograph.*

KRISTIN. Good God.

HUGH. Isn't it extremely fabulous?

TRUDI. What is it?

KRISTIN. We look so young.

HUGH. We were young. And fucking gorgeous.

CLAIRE. Can I see?

*They all start to crowd around KRISTIN to look over her shoulder at the photograph.*

HUGH. With our lives stretched in front of us like scrolls waiting to be written upon in indelible ink.

TRUDI. That's so poetic.

CLAIRE. Is that a poncho you're wearing?

HUGH. And our eyes glittering with the possibilities of all our tomorrows.

PETER. Jesus.

CLAIRE (*looking at the photograph*). That is hilarious.

HUGH. And our hearts thumping in anticipation of forthcoming sexual encounters.

TRUDI. You look so beautiful.

HUGH. Thank you, darling. She's not bad either, is she?

KRISTIN. A lifetime ago.

*Pause.*

TRUDI. Where was it taken?

HUGH. Appropriately enough, at a demonstration.

KRISTIN. *The demonstration.*

HUGH. In Grosvenor Square. We threw some eggs at your embassy, Trudi, and then ate the rest back at mine with an awful bottle of plonk.

PETER. What fun.

HUGH. It was the two of us and a mutual friend.

KRISTIN. Melissa Jones.

HUGH. A feminist poet with a gift for subtlety. Her first anthology, I believe, was entitled *Devil Penis*.

KRISTIN. I remember that floral shirt. People whistled at you in the street.

HUGH. I was provocative in my youth. Madam was down from Cambridge. A wee thing with a shockingly disproportionate amount of self-confidence.

PETER. Of course.

HUGH. I suppose we just wanted to change the world. At least your mother did. I was just looking for diversion or someone's cock to suck.

TRUDI. Okay.

HUGH. But your mother really was serious about the whole thing. She stood somewhere between reactive anger and the new hedonism like a beacon.

KRISTIN. A beacon?

HUGH. Because all those men really ever wanted was to be top-dog. It's biological, for God's sake, cloaked in the guise of political causes. It's the reason the Communist experiment died such a slow and ignominious death. Not evolved enough.

KRISTIN. Not quite ready.

HUGH. But your mother really did want to transform the world in a more permanent way. And I kind of tagged along for the ride. I was a follower, like a fucking disciple. The woman was persuasive.

PETER. I'm sure.

CLAIRE. That's hilarious.

KRISTIN *puts the framed photograph down somewhere in the room and it joins the tribal mask in staring out at them for the rest of the evening.*

TRUDI. Photographs are such beautiful things. I mean, I know that sounds obvious but all I mean is, maybe it's one of the many things we take for granted. To hold the past in your hand like that, just like you were, Kristin, to hold the past in your hand and look at it and remember what it was like to be young – the clothes, the friends, the many dreams you had. To hold the past in your hand as if it were a ball or a little mirror or something, to hold it as if...

*She suddenly realises she's getting a little carried away and loses her confidence.*

To hold the past in your hand.

HUGH. I really rather like you, you know.

TRUDI. Thank you.

*Pause.*

KRISTIN. So what was it exactly that you found hilarious, Claire?

CLAIRE. Sorry?

SIMON. Are you?

KRISTIN. Just a little.

SIMON. I'm not.

*Pause.*

I woke up one morning and realised that pretty much everything we are and everything we do is a response against you. So, no, I'm not bewildered in the least.

KRISTIN *continues as if she didn't hear this.*

KRISTIN. But she seems nice enough. And he seems to like her which is the most important thing.

SIMON. It is.

*Pause. She looks closely at his palm.*

KRISTIN. We have to make sure they're all out otherwise it could get infected. And then we can go to sleep. You look tired.

SIMON. I'm not.

KRISTIN. I am.

SIMON. I came to talk to you.

*She continues taking out the splinters.*

KRISTIN. Your brother had a go at me for not mentioning you in the book. He didn't understand that the book was about the work, more about my professional life and less about the personal things. He seemed offended in some way and implied that you were as well. I suppose I ought to apologise if it wasn't clear enough. I certainly didn't set out to upset you.

SIMON. No.

KRISTIN. So that's that.

SIMON. Yes. That's that.

KRISTIN. I was thinking, in the morning we should go for a walk. At least to the foot of the hills and maybe even halfway up them. The weather will be good, it said.

*He is in. Simon*  
SIMON. All right.

KRISTIN. And we could all do with the exercise.

SIMON. We could.

KRISTIN. Fresh air.

SIMON. Yes.

KRISTIN. The oxygen.

*Pause.*

SIMON. Lately I've been doing some retracing.

KRISTIN. Retracing?

SIMON. Locating the moments, finding the locations, remembering, and then suddenly going, 'Ah! So this is where it was. This is the place, that was the time when I first said to myself: this is who I am, how it is, what I'm worth.'

KRISTIN. What you're worth?

SIMON. This is where I was shaped. This is where the music started.

KRISTIN. What music?

SIMON. This is the moment that set the soundtrack for the rest of my life. Finding those moments. That's what I mean by retracing.

*Pause. She puts down his hand and the tweezers.*

KRISTIN. I need to talk to you about something.

SIMON. Because the thing is I've always felt this way.

KRISTIN. What way?

SIMON. Disjointed.

KRISTIN. Disjointed?

SIMON. And dislocated. Disillusioned. Dis - this, dis - that. Disturbed, distracted, discombobulated.



KRISTIN. I don't understand what you mean.

SIMON. But you keep going. You shrug it off. You say to yourself, 'This is the way it is for everyone.' And then one day you realise that it isn't. That your complete incapacity to feel any sort of self-worth is your own personal brand of misery.

KRISTIN. I don't understand you.

SIMON. So you keep going until that day. And then suddenly you run out of fuel. You can't lie to yourself any more. You've always felt that way. And so it catches up with you, that's all.

*Pause.*

KRISTIN. There's something you need to know.

SIMON. So that's why I came. To tell you about my retracing. And to ask you a question or two.

KRISTIN. It isn't easy but I've decided that it's the right thing.

SIMON. What is?

KRISTIN. I need to talk to you about Claire.

SIMON. What about her?

KRISTIN. I wasn't going to. I didn't want to.

SIMON. What about Claire?

KRISTIN. But I think I have to. Talk to you.

SIMON. About what?

KRISTIN. About something that happened this evening.

SIMON. I see.

KRISTIN. Because maybe knowing things for what they are is important now.

SIMON. That isn't why I came.

KRISTIN. So maybe it's for the best.

SIMON. Not to talk about Claire.

*Pause.*

KRISTIN. Her phone rang earlier. I thought it was mine. I answered it. Something embarrassing happened.

SIMON. I don't want to talk about Claire.

KRISTIN. I answered it by mistake. Thinking it was mine.

SIMON. That's not why I came here.

KRISTIN. So I answered it.

SIMON. SO PLEASE LET'S NOT TALK ABOUT CLAIRE.

*Pause. She returns her attention to his hand.*

KRISTIN. We're nearly finished. And then we'll put a plaster on it. There's only a couple more.

SIMON. Lately I can't stop thinking of that year.

KRISTIN. What year?

SIMON. The year you took us to Florence.

KRISTIN. What about it?

SIMON. After the divorce. You were working on your book.

KRISTIN. The first one.

SIMON. And you took us with you.

KRISTIN. I did.

*Pause.*

SIMON. Do you remember the house?

KRISTIN. Of course I do.

SIMON. Overlooking the city.

KRISTIN. That view.

SIMON. There was an orange tree in the garden.

KRISTIN. I remember.



SIMON. It was vast.

KRISTIN. We used to sit in its shade. In the afternoons. The three of us. I'd be traipsing around churches in the mornings doing my research. Then I'd pick you up from that funny school and then we'd spend the afternoons in the shade of that vast orange tree. I'd be ploughing through those heavy tomes and making notes for the book and you and your brother would be doing your homework.

SIMON. Do you remember?

KRISTIN. How could I forget?

SIMON. I've been thinking about it a lot.

KRISTIN. It was the happiest year of my life.

SIMON. Sometimes on Sundays you'd take us with you. To the basilicas, the galleries. Or we'd get in the car and drive to some other town. You were always working. I remember spending hours in the back of some church somewhere, watching you scribbling notes with your head tilted back staring up at some fucking fresco.

KRISTIN. I was obsessed, it's true.

SIMON. I always felt I was competing for your attention.

KRISTIN. I suppose it was a vocation. A calling.

SIMON. Yes.

KRISTIN. But I took you with me. I took you to Florence with me.

SIMON. I know.

KRISTIN. And then he took you away.

*Pause.*

SIMON. We always thought you'd follow us.

KRISTIN. I'm sure.

SIMON. We thought you'd come for us.

KRISTIN. I know you did.

SIMON. Fight for us.

KRISTIN. Yes.

SIMON. Because that's what we thought parents did.

KRISTIN. Of course.

SIMON. Mothers.

KRISTIN. Of course you did.

SIMON. So we waited, and waited.

KRISTIN. Yes.

SIMON. And waited.

KRISTIN. I know.

SIMON. But you never came.

*Pause.*

I was seven years old.

KRISTIN. I know how old you were.

*Pause. She takes out a plaster and starts to apply it to his hand.*

They're all out. We'll just put a plaster on it and then we're done.

SIMON. I mean, if your parent dies when you're that age, then obviously you feel something, I don't know, irreparable, long-lasting, something you never quite get over.

KRISTIN. Of course you do.

SIMON. A loss, an injury, something that never quite mends.

KRISTIN. Yes.

SIMON. But when a parent, when your mother –

KRISTIN. I know what you're going to say.

SIMON. Doesn't come for you, it's just as damaging.

KRISTIN. Of course it is.

SIMON. Abandons you, it's just as harmful.

KRISTIN. I didn't abandon you.

SIMON. And maybe even worse.

KRISTIN. He took you away.

SIMON. But you never came. And then you became this person we'd spend holidays with.

*Pause. She starts to pack away the first-aid kit.*

Do you remember once I came to Italy on my own? It was the summer. I must have been - what - eleven? Peter had gone to stay with a friend in Cornwall. Dad put me on the train in London. You were supposed to pick me up in Genoa.

KRISTIN. I can't remember.

SIMON. But something happened and you never made it. I mean, you did eventually but it was like a day later.

KRISTIN. I really can't remember.

SIMON. But I'd been on my own through the night. I had a phone number for you in Italy but I rang it and there wasn't an answer. I remember all the trains had come in and all the people had been greeted by their families or friends and I sat watching them and waiting to spot your face in the crowd.

KRISTIN. Why are you telling me this now?

SIMON. But it got dark and you never came. The station emptied and these two women came out and started mopping the platforms. I remember that.

KRISTIN. Why are you telling me this?

SIMON. It must have been one in the morning and I was lying on this bench when this man approached me.

KRISTIN. A man?

SIMON. There was a café on the side of the platform and I think he'd been sitting there for quite a long time and had noticed this boy in a suit looking rather lost. So he came to talk to me.

KRISTIN. I think I do remember now.

SIMON. Remember?

KRISTIN. There'd been a misunderstanding. Crossed wires.

Your father had said -

SIMON. It doesn't really matter.

KRISTIN. He'd left a message with the cleaning lady who came in once a week. Which was a stupid thing to do as she didn't speak a word of English and his Italian was non-existent. Anyway, she got it wrong. Or wrote it down on a piece of paper which I didn't find until it was too late. But that's what caused it all. It was a stupid thing to do. And I'd been working. I remember there was a lecture that I -

SIMON. He must have been - I don't know, about forty, or something. Probably had bad acne when he was younger because his skin was slightly pock-marked.

KRISTIN. But that's what happened. Your father had been careless.

SIMON. He spoke quite good English but I think he was German or Dutch or something. Doesn't really matter, though, does it, what nationality he was. Anyway he asked me if I was all right -

KRISTIN. Why are you telling me this now?

SIMON. And I said that I was and that I was waiting for my mother but that she would be there soon and that I would wait for her until she got there.

KRISTIN. Why are you telling me this?

SIMON. He then said that he was worried about a boy of my age spending the whole night on my own and asked me if I wanted to have a Coke with him in the cafeteria. I said why

not so we went to the cafeteria but it had just closed and there was nowhere else to go.

KRISTIN. So did he leave you alone?

SIMON. I remember then we sat down on a bench outside the cafeteria and we talked and at one point he said something like, 'If I was your parent I would never leave you waiting for me on a station platform all night long.' This made an impression on me because half of me was angry at him for saying it and I wanted to defend you and explain to him that it was all a misunderstanding, that you would show up and everything would be all right, and half of me agreed with him and was happy that he'd expressed it in that particular way.

KRISTIN. What a strange thing to say.

SIMON. And then he said, 'Why don't you come back to my house and have something to eat and you can rest and then I'll bring you back in the morning.'

KRISTIN. What happened?

SIMON. And even though I felt, no, I *knew* that it was dangerous, that it was wrong for me to follow this man back to his house, I stood up and picked up my bag and followed him.

KRISTIN. You went to his house?

SIMON. And part of me was thinking - 'This will show her, this will show her, this will fucking show her.'

KRISTIN. You went to this man's house?

SIMON. So we walked through the streets of Genoa and it was in the middle of the night and there was nobody about. I remember thinking that we must be very near the sea because there were many seagulls in the sky.

KRISTIN. Why have you never told me this before?

SIMON. Then eventually we got to this old building and he opened the door and we walked up these stairs that stank of

urine or something. His flat was at the top and he opened the door and let me in. He asked me to sit down and then he gave me a glass of wine and made some joke about not telling my parents.

KRISTIN. What happened?

SIMON. And then he cooked a meal. I watched him taking things out of a cupboard and out of the fridge and he started preparing a meal. He made pasta with a tomato sauce and as he cooked he talked to me about what had brought him to Italy and about other things too and I noticed that he was nervous and that his hands were shaking a little and I could feel the wine whooshing around in my head.

KRISTIN. Did he hurt you?

SIMON. At one point I asked him if I could use the bathroom so he took me down the hall and showed me where it was and I went in and closed the door behind me. I remember the light in the bathroom was very weak as if the bulb was broken or something, it was quite dark. So that when I looked into the mirror I could only just see my face. I stood there for some time just staring at myself and wondering why you hadn't shown up at the station.

KRISTIN. Why have you never told me all this before?

SIMON. And it was when I was trying to see my face in the mirror that I heard him breathing outside the door. So he'd been standing there all along, on the other side of the door. And then I tried to open it, to open the door but it was jammed.

KRISTIN. Jammed?

SIMON. As if it was blocked. As if he was blocking it from the other side.

KRISTIN. What did he do to you? What did this man do to you?

SIMON. Then after a little it opened and he wasn't there. He was back in the kitchen. So I went back. I wanted to run away but I was too scared.



KRISTIN. Did he hurt you?

SIMON. The food was ready so we ate in silence. After we'd eaten we sat on the sofa for some time and he kept talking nervously and then he asked me if I wanted to sleep in his bed with him and I said that I didn't. Then he took some sheets out of a cupboard and turned the sofa into a bed for me and then he said he'd wake me at six in the morning and walk me back to the station. And that's what he did. He walked me back to the bench that he'd found me on.

KRISTIN. So he never hurt you?

SIMON. Lately I can't seem to get that night out of my head. I keep thinking of myself trying to find my face in the mirror in the dim-lit bathroom of that dark building in that strange and foreign city.

*Pause.*

Where were you?

KRISTIN. I told you. Your father had made a mistake and had -

SIMON. No. I mean, where were you? Where were you? Where were you?

*Pause.*

You were never there. I have to tell you now that the thing I remember most about you is your absence. I have to be honest and tell you that. That's what I wanted to tell you when I read your book. That's my response to it.

*Pause.*

So you look for those moments. And you say to yourself, 'That's when it was.'

*Pause. KRISTIN stands and picks up the first-aid kit. She walks over to the counter and puts it back into the cupboard.*

KRISTIN. I'm very tired. We can continue talking tomorrow. I've left a towel at the end of the bed if you want to have a shower in the morning.

SIMON. I saw it.

KRISTIN walks over to him and kisses him on the forehead.

KRISTIN. Goodnight.

SIMON. I know about Claire. What it was you wanted to tell me. Do you blame her? I haven't been around for some time now. In any way.

*Pause.*

KRISTIN leaves the room. SIMON leans over and picks up the framed photograph that HUGH gave KRISTIN as a gift. He looks at it closely, as if trying to understand something about it.

*Lights fade to darkness.*

## Scene Two

*The next morning. HUGH, TRUDI and CLAIRE are in the kitchen. They are having breakfast - TRUDI is eating a bowl of cereal and CLAIRE is playing with a piece of toast. HUGH is drinking coffee and casually leafing through the newspaper.*

CLAIRE. All I'm really saying is that I think you're very lucky.

TRUDI. I am?

CLAIRE. To have your faith, I mean.

TRUDI. Okay.

CLAIRE. Especially nowadays.

TRUDI. How do you mean?

CLAIRE. Although I wouldn't be surprised if religion is about to make a big comeback.

HUGH. Is it?



PETER. It's not that, sweetie.

*Pause.*

HUGH. What did she mean when she called her a dinosaur?

*Pause.*

Excuse me, but I think I'm going to be sick.

HUGH *rushes out of the room.*

PETER and TRUDI *are left alone. There is a pause and then TRUDI starts to quietly cry.*

PETER. Trudi?

TRUDI. I'm sorry, I -

PETER. Sweetie?

TRUDI. I'm sorry. I'm just a little emotional, that's all. It's just that -

PETER. Of course you are -

TRUDI. It's just that I wasn't expecting this.

PETER. Neither was I.

TRUDI (*through her tears*). And everything you said made me so sad, so very, very sad and I started thinking about poor Simon and then earlier when your mother was talking to me about Giotto, about what he did as an artist, I mean about how he changed the world, how he transformed the way we looked at each other and that made me quite emotional too, I don't know why but it did, it kind of all made sense and then I started thinking, later, when she was talking about art and responsibility, I started thinking about Jesus, about what it is about him that I love so much, about why it is I'm a Christian, and I had a terrible thought that what if the only reason I like Jesus, I love Jesus is just because... because... is just because...

PETER. Because what?

TRUDI. Is just because he makes life simpler.

PETER. Oh, sweetie.

TRUDI. And I ruined her Japanese dress.

PETER. Honey.

TRUDI *runs out of the room in tears.*

Jesus.

*He runs after her.*

*The room is empty. Then SIMON enters. He is wearing his coat and looking slightly dishevelled. His right hand is bleeding and he has wrapped a handkerchief around it. He looks around the room as if wondering where everyone has disappeared to. He sits at the table.*

*Blackout.*

*End of Act One.*

AP:6  
Trudi

TRUDI. Hi, Kristin.

CLAIRE. Hello.

PETER. Hi.

HUGH. The coffee's hot.

PETER and TRUDI exit.

KRISTIN. Is Simon still in bed?

CLAIRE. No, he's gone.

KRISTIN. Gone?

CLAIRE. He left at seven.

HUGH. None of us got to say goodbye.

KRISTIN. How do you mean, he's gone?

CLAIRE. He'll be home by now.

KRISTIN. I thought he'd stay for breakfast.

CLAIRE. He didn't sleep much.

KRISTIN. I thought I'd see him.

CLAIRE. And then I woke up and he was gone.

KRISTIN. I see.

*Pause. HUGH senses that he should leave the two women alone. He checks his pockets.*

HUGH. I've left that bloody car key on the bedside table.

*He leaves the room. There is a pause as KRISTIN goes to the cafetière and pours herself a cup of coffee.*

KRISTIN. I'm surprised you're still here.

CLAIRE. Are you?

KRISTIN. Just a little.

CLAIRE. I'm not in make-up till eleven.

*Pause.*

Besides, I wanted to talk to you.

KRISTIN. Oh?

CLAIRE. I don't think I'll be seeing you again.

KRISTIN. Won't you?

CLAIRE. So I thought it only right to say goodbye. Consider it a mark of respect.

*Pause.*

I don't know what you and Simon talked about last night. But when he came back to the room he woke me up and we chatted till dawn. You'll be happy to hear we've decided to part ways.

KRISTIN. Part ways?

CLAIRE. Don't flatter yourself into believing that it was your doing. It was inevitable. We've just been putting it off, that's all. I'm surprised we lasted for a year and a half.

KRISTIN. So am I.

CLAIRE. He said he realised the only reason he was attracted to me was because I was the polar opposite of you.

KRISTIN. I'm sure he meant it as a compliment.

CLAIRE. I'm sure he did.

*Pause. KRISTIN puts down her coffee and starts to busy herself around the kitchen - she gets a discloth from the sink and starts to wipe down the kitchen table.*

It's funny. When you said last night that you thought I was good in *A Doll's House*, my heart missed a beat. I nearly leapt for joy. How do you do that?

KRISTIN. I really wouldn't know.

CLAIRE. Did I ever tell you about my father?

KRISTIN. Your father?

CLAIRE. I watched him slowly drown in a mountain of unpaid bills. When I was thirteen he was declared bankrupt. I used to come home every day after school and the bathroom door

was always closed and the sound was always the same – the sound of my mother's stifled sobs. Then she'd come out with a smile on her face and cook dinner. One day, he left and never came back. My mother and I moved to a small rented flat and lived on benefits. The first day I moved my bed and there was a whole lot of blood on the wall. I spent all my time in that flat wondering what had happened before we arrived. I came up with quite a few upsetting scenarios. I had a vivid imagination.

*Pause.*

Since then most of my life I've been running away from unpaid bills, stifled sobs and those dark-red stains. That may have affected some of my artistic choices.

*Pause.*

That's my individual story. But something tells me that somewhere along the line you've stopped listening to people's individual stories. I wonder when that happened.

*Pause. She waits for something from KRISTIN but nothing comes.*

There's a part of me that admires you. The way you've held onto the things you've believed in. But your idealism has turned into hardness, Kristin. It has a thick, thick shell. *You* do. A carapace. Isn't that the word?

KRISTIN. Is it?

CLAIRE. 'Why does she demonise me like that?' I kept asking myself. 'Why does she vilify me? Why does she scrutinise everything I do and then condemn it without a second thought?'

KRISTIN. Is that what I do?

CLAIRE. And then I decided it's got nothing to do with me really. It's not about me.

KRISTIN. Isn't it?

CLAIRE. It's about you, Kristin.

KRISTIN. Oh?

CLAIRE. When I was in my room last night I had a little bit of a revelation.

KRISTIN. That must have been a novel experience.

CLAIRE. They say, don't they, that when people get older they just become worse versions of themselves.

KRISTIN. Is that what they say?

CLAIRE. Maybe in some people that's a little more pronounced.

KRISTIN. Maybe.

CLAIRE. And I expect it's really a case of having to hold onto everything you are. Everything you *were*. The choices you made, the paths you followed. Because if you start to question them, if you start to doubt them... well, then you're fucked really, aren't you?

KRISTIN. I wouldn't know.

CLAIRE. So you hang on with every fibre of your being.

*Pause.*

It must be exhausting being you.

KRISTIN. Nothing like a bit of pop psychology.

TRUDI and PETER return, followed by HUGH.

TRUDI. It was in the bag, of course.

KRISTIN. Have you all had breakfast?

TRUDI. I've had some cereal.

HUGH. I called the electrician. He'll be here by noon.

KRISTIN. Thank you.

PETER. Sweetie, do you want some more coffee?

TRUDI. Thanks, honey.