

Don't Wear Black

Cast of Characters

: Edward
: Richard
: Lindsay
: Catherine

Scene

A house by the sea

Time

Now

Scene 1

The living room of a house by the sea, in darkness. Late at night. DS is a door into a hallway, and in that hallway is a staircase.

There is light on in the hallway, and upstairs. No upstairs rooms are seen, but sometimes there is light in them.

The sound of hushed voices outside, and fumbling around, looking for something.

A key turns in the front door lock, and slowly the door is pushed open.

Two men enter, dimly lit by the hallway, before stepping into the main room and turning on the lights. In the room there's a table, with a couple of chairs around it, and a couple more scattered around. There's a stillness to it, like it hasn't had people in it for a long time.

*They are **RICHARD** and **EDWARD**, both of them are middle-aged, and staring the winter of existence in the face, something they'd admit to themselves, if not each other. They go back forever.*

RICHARD

I can't believe it.

EDWARD

Why not?

RICHARD

I mean, the key was under the mat.

EDWARD

So?

RICHARD

Nobody leaves a key under the mat, not in the real world.

EDWARD

She said the key was gonna be under the mat.

RICHARD

I know, but still, I didn't think it actually would be.

EDWARD

Because nobody does that?

(CONTINUED)

RICHARD

Exactly.
Not in the real world anyway.

EDWARD

What's this then?
If it isn't the real world?

RICHARD

Your guess is as good as mine.

Pause.

EDWARD

It doesn't feel like the real world though, does it?
Not really, I mean.
(Beat.)
Not now.

RICHARD

No, it doesn't.

Beat.

EDWARD

Glad it's not just me.

RICHARD

I think it's everybody, really.

Beat.

EDWARD

I hope so.

RICHARD

Yeah.
(Beat.)
Me too.

Pause.

EDWARD

How're you feeling?

RICHARD

Fine.
(Beat.)
You know, all things considered.
You?

EDWARD

Fine.
(Beat.)
I guess.
I don't know.

Pause.

RICHARD

I don't either.

EDWARD

Glad it's not just me.

RICHARD laughs a little at this.

RICHARD

Should I drink every time you say that?
(EDWARD looks at him, a little confused.)
"Glad it's not just me."
That's twice you've said it. Already.

Beat.

EDWARD

Well...
You know how it is.

RICHARD

Yeah.
(Beat.)
It's not just you.

Beat.

EDWARD smiles a little.

EDWARD

I'm glad.

RICHARD

So am I.

Pause.

EDWARD

It's just...
Well, I know you were close.

RICHARD

You were close with him too.

EDWARD

Yeah.
(Beat.)
I guess.
(Beat.)
But still, it's...
It's different, isn't it?
(Beat.)
You know, when you've...

He can't seem to find the right words.

RICHARD

Yeah.
I know.

Pause.

EDWARD searches in a jacket pocket for a pack of cigarettes and a lighter.

EDWARD

Fag?

RICHARD

(an instinctive response)
Queer?

Beat.

EDWARD

Some things never change.

RICHARD

They shouldn't.

EDWARD

I know.

Pause.

EDWARD puts a cigarette in his mouth, and offers the pack to RICHARD, who declines.

RICHARD

Are we allowed to smoke in here?

EDWARD

I'd've thought so.
(Beat.)
Why? Are we not?
Will we set off a smoke alarm or something?

(CONTINUED)

Beat.

RICHARD chuckles.

EDWARD

(cigarette still between his lips)
What's funny?

RICHARD

It's just so juvenile. Wondering if it's okay for us to smoke.

EDWARD

Worrying about being caught and worrying about setting off a smoke alarm are two totally different concerns.

RICHARD gives him an unconvinced, unimpressed look.

EDWARD

Want me to ask?
Will that make you feel better?

RICHARD considers this.

RICHARD

Is she awake?

EDWARD

The light's on.

RICHARD

Doesn't mean she's awake.

EDWARD

So I'm checking that as well, am I?

RICHARD

No, no, don't bother.

Beat. They're still at a cigarette related impasse.

EDWARD

Sod it.

He lights the cigarette.

RICHARD

Your response to most things.

EDWARD

(sarcastic)

Ha ha ha.

I forgot how funny you are.

RICHARD

Yeah, I'm a riot.

Pause.

EDWARD sits down and smokes, and seems content for a moment.

RICHARD stays stood, is restless.

A short silence, in which they both seem to wonder if a smoke alarm will go off. It doesn't.

EDWARD takes a long drag, victorious.

EDWARD

Told you.

RICHARD

Just 'cause you didn't set an alarm off doesn't mean you're allowed to smoke.

EDWARD

She'll never notice.

RICHARD

She will.

EDWARD

She won't.

RICHARD

She will.

You don't know her like I do.

Beat.

Both men smile at each other, and then start laughing.

EDWARD

How did we ever do this when we were young?

Sneak cigarettes when somebody was upstairs; I swear I spent more on air freshener to cover the smell than I actually did on fags. Well, on cigarettes.

It was so fucking stressful.

And that just made me smoke more.

(CONTINUED)

RICHARD

Vicious cycle.

EDWARD

So I've heard.

Beat.

RICHARD

That's not how I did it.

I didn't have a cigarette in one hand and air freshener in the other.

EDWARD

How did you do it?

RICHARD

Like everybody else did, I just smoked out my bedroom window.

EDWARD

One of the lucky ones.

I never had an upstairs bedroom.

RICHARD

Really?

EDWARD

Really.

(*Beat.*)

Sometimes I forget that you never saw that room.

Feels like you should've, you know?

RICHARD

Yeah.

EDWARD

I haven't been in it for years.

At least ten.

(*Beat.*)

And even before my parents sold it, I hadn't been in there for a few years.

(*Beat.*)

Feels like a long time ago.

A *really* long time.

Pause.

EDWARD looks at RICHARD, who is still stood, and still seems a little uncertain about being there.

(CONTINUED)

EDWARD

How long's it been since you had one?

RICHARD

Couple of years.

EDWARD

And how long's it been since I offered you one?

RICHARD

You just did.

EDWARD

Doesn't count.

RICHARD

No?

EDWARD

No.
Exceptional circumstances.

Pause.

RICHARD

Yeah.
(Beat.)
A couple of hours ago. That was the last time you offered.

EDWARD

Of course.

RICHARD

Of course.
(Beat.)
Were those not exceptional circumstances?

EDWARD

Nah.
It's different, being here.

RICHARD

Yeah.
It is.

Pause.

EDWARD

(smiling, a little cheeky)
Want one?

Beat.

RICHARD

Fuck it, go on.

RICHARD walks over to EDWARD.

RICHARD leans in while EDWARD puts a cigarette in his mouth. RICHARD lights it.

Beat. There's a moment of intimacy between them. It goes as quickly as it comes, and isn't even that romantic; just a moment of two people feeling the same thing in the same moment.

Pause. They wonder if it will come back, or last a moment longer. It doesn't.

RICHARD steps away, and smokes. He stays stood, but seems a bit more steady now.

EDWARD

Helps, doesn't it?

RICHARD

(a little reluctantly)

Yeah.

EDWARD

Like I've been saying for years.

RICHARD

Decades.

EDWARD

Fuck off.

(Pause.)

God, it really has been, hasn't it?

Decades.

RICHARD

Afraid so.

Pause.

EDWARD

We got old.

RICHARD

Happens to everybody.

Beat.

(CONTINUED)

EDWARD

Well...
It didn't always.
(Pause.)
Didn't used to.

Pause.

RICHARD

True.
(Beat.)
True.

Beat.

EDWARD

Feels like a long time ago.

RICHARD

It was.

EDWARD

Yeah.
It was.
(Beat.)
But, I mean...
It feels...
(Beat. He sighs.)
I don't know what I mean.

Pause.

RICHARD

Like the world got bigger.

EDWARD

Yeah.
(Beat.)
Sort of.
(Beat.)
Like...
Like the world got bigger until it didn't.
(Beat.)
Like, it could only get so big, and then...
Then it started moving back in on itself.

Pause.

RICHARD

Apparently that's happening to the universe.
(Beat.)
Or that it *will* happen to the universe.
I can't remember which.

(CONTINUED)

EDWARD

Since when did you know anything about the universe?

RICHARD

(with mock offence)

Since always.

EDWARD

Obviously.

RICHARD

Obviously.

Pause.

EDWARD

So if it's happening to us, and to the universe.

RICHARD

It might not be. Not yet.

EDWARD

Right.

(Beat.)

So, if it's happening to us, and is either happening to the universe or might in however many millions of years time, then our world is still smaller than everyone else's?

Beat.

RICHARD

Yeah.

(Beat.)

Something like that.

Beat.

EDWARD

Some things never change.

Pause.

EDWARD gets up and lights another cigarette, keeping the pack out for a moment.

EDWARD

(gesturing with the pack)

Fancy another?

Beat.

RICHARD

Go on then.

EDWARD

What happened to quitting?

Beat.

RICHARD

Funny, that.

How years of work can go up in smoke.

EDWARD

Is it?

Pause.

RICHARD

Well...

You know.

(*Beat.*)

Just thought that, today, maybe I could have one or two.

Like a cheat day.

Beat.

EDWARD

It's what he would've done.

RICHARD

I think you're right.

RICHARD walks over to EDWARD.

This time EDWARD hands over the lighter, and RICHARD lights his own cigarette.

RICHARD

It's ironic though.

(*Beat.*)

Smoking today, I mean.

Well, tonight.

(*Beat.*)

Just 'cause, well, he was the one that helped me quit smoking.

EDWARD

'Cause he wanted you to live longer?

Pause.

(CONTINUED)

RICHARD

Nothing quite as noble as that.

EDWARD

No?

RICHARD

Nah.

He just didn't like the way I tasted.

EDWARD

Such a romantic.

RICHARD

Something like that.

Pause.

RICHARD becomes still and silent for a moment, before examining his cigarette in a surprising amount of detail.

He puts it back in his mouth, and keeps smoking.

RICHARD

You should quit.

EDWARD

So should you.

RICHARD

I did.

Have.

Beat.

EDWARD

I've never worried about it killing me.

(Beat.)

After a while you just stop worrying about it.

RICHARD

About smoking?

EDWARD

Dying.

A short silence.

They smoke.

RICHARD

I still worry about it.

(Beat.)

I mean, it doesn't keep me up at night or anything, but still...

I worry about it.

EDWARD

I used to.

(Beat.)

A lot.

It kept me up at night.

RICHARD

Me too.

(Pause.)

When I was with...

(Beat.)

When we were together, it kept me up at night.

(Beat.)

I blamed it on the millennium.

EDWARD

Seriously?

RICHARD

Yeah

EDWARD

And it worked?

RICHARD

Not really.

(Pause.)

I just said that it all felt a bit...

Weird.

(Beat.)

That there was something in the air.

(Beat.)

I mean...

The whole y2k thing, everybody was expecting the end of the world.

I know we were.

(Beat.)

And then...

I think people ended up being disappointed that the world *didn't* end.

(Beat.)

I mean...

You spend so much time planning for it in your head, so much time making worst case scenarios for the end of civilization, that when you don't have to use them, you feel sort of...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

RICHARD (cont'd)

Cheated. I think.

(Pause.)

Sometimes I think that's how I felt.

Cheated. That the world kept turning, that nothing shut down, that...

That we just had to keep on living.

(Pause.)

It felt strange, to just sort of go back to everything being...

Normal.

(Beat.)

So it kept me up at night.

Dying and not dying.

(Beat.)

And I blamed it on the millennium.

A short silence.

EDWARD

Did you ever...

Ever tell him any of that?

RICHARD

No.

(Beat.)

I wanted to, but I just...

I couldn't.

(Beat.)

I just couldn't.

Pause.

EDWARD

I'm sorry.

Beat.

RICHARD

Thanks.

(Beat.)

Now I'll never tell him.

EDWARD

Is that bad?

RICHARD

I don't know.

(Pause.)

I'll miss him.

(CONTINUED)

EDWARD

Me too.

*Pause.**The sound of movement upstairs. The light on the upstairs landing is switched off, plunging the back of the stage into darkness.**Beat.*

EDWARD

So she was awake.

RICHARD

Guess so.

(Beat.)

We could have asked her about the smoking then.

EDWARD

Yeah.

It's good that we didn't.

RICHARD

Why?

EDWARD

She might have said no.

Pause.

RICHARD

It's good of her to let us stay here.

EDWARD

Yeah, it is.

Beat.

RICHARD

Is anybody else gonna be here?

EDWARD

I think so.

Just a few people who couldn't make it today.

RICHARD

Sounds ominous.

EDWARD

Maybe.

A short silence.

(CONTINUED)

EDWARD

Was she...
Was she there today?

RICHARD

I think so.

EDWARD

She'd have to be, right?
(Beat.)
She'd have to be.

RICHARD

I don't know about that.
(Beat.)
But still...
I think she was there.

Pause.

EDWARD

There's only one spare room.

RICHARD

I know.
(Beat.)
His room.

EDWARD

Yeah.
(Pause.)
Do you...

Beat.

RICHARD

No.
Thanks.
(Beat.)
But I just...
I couldn't.
(Beat.)
You sleep there.

EDWARD

You sure?

RICHARD

Yeah.
(Beat.)
Sure.
(Beat.)
I'll sleep here.

(CONTINUED)

EDWARD

In a chair?

RICHARD

Yeah.

Won't be the first time.

EDWARD

Or the last.

RICHARD

Exactly.

Pause.

EDWARD

Are you okay?

RICHARD

I don't know.

Beat.

EDWARD

I'm sorry.

RICHARD

Yeah.

(Beat.)

Me too.

Scene 2*Late morning the next day.**The light upstairs is still off. The lights in the living room are on.**RICHARD is awake, and has been for a while. He's a little restless, pacing, drinking coffee, unsure of what to do with himself.**After a while, EDWARD comes down. For a moment, he just stands in the doorway, looking at RICHARD. Neither of them know what to do: in the house, with themselves, with each other.**A long silence, and then a moment of stillness, interrupted when EDWARD walks into the room.*

EDWARD

Morning.

(CONTINUED)

RICHARD
Is it?

EDWARD
Yeah.

RICHARD
Oh.
(Beat.)
I thought it was later.
Like, afternoon or something.
(Beat.)
I've been up for a while.

EDWARD
I can tell.

RICHARD
How?

EDWARD
You're moving around a lot.

Beat.

For a moment, if just to prove a point, RICHARD stands completely still.

EDWARD
Very funny.

RICHARD
So I've heard.
(Beat.)
Never from you though.

EDWARD
No?

RICHARD
No.
(Beat.)
Never.

Pause.

EDWARD
Clearly I've been missing out.

RICHARD
Clearly.

Pause.

EDWARD

How did you sleep?

RICHARD shrugs.

RICHARD

I've been up for a while.
On and off.
(Beat.)
So I didn't really sleep.
(Beat.)
You?

EDWARD

I didn't.
At all.
(Beat.)
Well...
Couldn't.
(Pause.)
You know...
In his room.

Pause.

RICHARD

Yeah.
(Beat.)
I know.
Or at least...
I get it.
(Pause.)
I couldn't really sleep for a while.
You know...
After.

Beat.

EDWARD

Yeah.
I know.
(Beat.)
I couldn't either.

Pause.

RICHARD

I still can't.
(Beat.)
I keep expecting him to call, or something, or tell me
he's been dragged out after work by people twenty years
younger than him.
(Beat.)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

RICHARD (cont'd)

I keep expecting to hear his voice again, so...

(Beat.)

So I don't sleep.

Can't sleep.

It's one or the other.

A short silence.

EDWARD gets out his cigarettes and lights one.

EDWARD

Want one?

RICHARD says nothing, just walks forward and takes the cigarette he's being offered. He's shaking a little.

EDWARD lights the cigarette for him.

RICHARD

Thanks.

EDWARD

It's nothing.

RICHARD

That's not true.

(Beat.)

It's something.

EDWARD

What, my still being a bad influence after all this time?

RICHARD

No.

(Beat.)

Maybe.

It is impressive.

EDWARD

Yeah.

In a way.

Silence.

They smoke.

EDWARD

I guess it's nice that some things never change.

RICHARD

Yeah.
(Beat.)
Some things never change.

Silence.

They smoke.

RICHARD

Did you hear any noise last night?

EDWARD

From her room?

RICHARD nods.

EDWARD

Not a word.
Not a sound.
(Beat.)
Silent as the grave.

RICHARD shoots him a disapproving look.

RICHARD

Really?

EDWARD

Really.

RICHARD

It's a little...
Tasteless, don't you think?

Beat.

EDWARD

Maybe.
(Beat.)
Probably.
But I just...
I dunno, I thought that it's the sort of thing he
would've said.
(Beat.)
I think I would've felt worse if I didn't say it.
Like I was doing him a disservice or something.

Pause.

RICHARD

I guess.
(Beat.)
If he had time, he would have made jokes himself.

(CONTINUED)

EDWARD

Yeah.
I think so.
(Beat.)
He just...
Ran out of time.

RICHARD

That's how it goes though.
I mean, more often than not these days.

EDWARD

You think?

RICHARD

Yeah.
I do. Advances in medicine and all.

EDWARD

(weary, tired of hearing the same thing
over and over again)
"This doesn't have to be a death sentence."

Pause.

RICHARD

I mean...
It doesn't. Does it?

EDWARD

That's not the point.
Doctors have been saying that for years. Back when it
was a death sentence.

RICHARD

But...
(Beat. A little drained of hope.)
It doesn't have to be.

A short silence.

EDWARD

I'm surviving. That's all I can really ask for. Doing
as I'm told, draining my cocktails, that sort of thing.
(Beat.)
Taking it a day at a time.
After all, tomorrow is another day.

Pause.

RICHARD

Sorry.
(Beat.)
I should have asked how you were doing.

(CONTINUED)

EDWARD

Why?
Politeness? Obligation?

RICHARD

I care about you.

Beat.

EDWARD

I'm glad you didn't ask.
(Beat.)
If you didn't ask, then I don't look bad.
(Pause.)
Who else is supposed to be coming here?

RICHARD

Not sure.

EDWARD

And when are these people you're not sure about meant to arrive?

RICHARD

Not sure.

Beat.

EDWARD

Right.

Pause.

RICHARD

It can't be anyone we know.
If we knew them, they'd have mentioned coming, right?

EDWARD

Probably.

Beat.

The sound of movement upstairs, heard vaguely, muffled.

EDWARD

(Deliberately hammy, overdramatic)
"When there's no room in Hell, the dead will walk the earth."

Beat.

No response from RICHARD.

EDWARD

Dawn of the Dead?

RICHARD shakes his head.

EDWARD

Can't believe you've never seen it.

RICHARD

Can't believe you have.

EDWARD

Sort of went through a phase of watching lots of stuff like that. Zombies, vampires. Unclean creatures. Stuff filled with plague and contagion.

Pause.

RICHARD doesn't know what to say.

EDWARD

(gesturing upstairs)

I haven't seen her since we arrived.

RICHARD

Me neither.

EDWARD

Maybe it's him, dressed up in her clothes.
Try not to get stabbed in the shower.

RICHARD gets this reference, laughs a little, because of, rather than in spite of, the fact that it's tasteless.

RICHARD

(a pretty good Anthony Perkins impression)

"A boy's best friend is his mother."

EDWARD

Not always.

Beat.

RICHARD

True.

Pause.

They listen again for a moment for any kind of sound, wondering if she'll make her way downstairs.

(CONTINUED)

EDWARD

I never knew where that came from. That whole thing about gay men and their mothers.

RICHARD

Something about the perils of being too close to femininity, I think.

EDWARD

That seems a bit old-fashioned, even for gay-bashing.

RICHARD

Right? It's just ridiculous, the idea that femininity is the thing that's...

(He almost trails off, but ends the sentence quietly, limply)

Contagious.

(Beat.)

Sorry.

Poor choice of words.

EDWARD shrugs.

EDWARD

I don't mind.
Why would I?

RICHARD

You're sure?

EDWARD nods.

RICHARD

Okay.

Beat.

EDWARD

Okay.

Pause.

The sound of footsteps again from upstairs. Again, it sounds like they might lead to a descent, but they don't.

RICHARD

Maybe she's avoiding us.

EDWARD

Why?

RICHARD

Maybe she's homophobic.

Beat.

EDWARD

Yeah.

(Beat.)

Maybe.

(Beat.)

Think we could get away with asking?

Like, really bluntly asking. Walking upstairs, knocking on her bedroom door, looking her straight in the face, and saying "Catherine, do you hate queers?"

Pause.

RICHARD

I don't think so.

Beat.

EDWARD

Me neither.

(Beat.)

Shame.

RICHARD

That's one word for it.

A short silence.

EDWARD

I never told my parents.

(Beat.)

I wanted to. Wanted to for a while actually. Wrote endless drafts of letters that never got sent.

(Beat.)

And then...

Well, after the diagnosis, I couldn't.

They'd think it was a death sentence.

(Beat.)

They'd think I was one of those Bad Gays.

(Beat.)

Which I was, I guess.

RICHARD

You can't say that.

EDWARD

Why not?

(CONTINUED)

RICHARD

Makes it sound like you think you deserve what you got.

EDWARD

Don't I?

Beat.

RICHARD

No.

Pause.

RICHARD goes over to EDWARD, but once he gets there, is unsure what to do.

A slightly awkward pause, both men seemingly aware of the shadow that hangs over this attempt at intimacy.

RICHARD kisses EDWARDS cheek.

RICHARD

You don't deserve it.
Nobody does.
Nobody did.

A short silence.

A knock at the door.

Beat.

Both men wonder if CATHERINE will descend the stairs to answer.

Another knock.

RICHARD

I'll get it.

EDWARD

Okay.

RICHARD goes to leave.

EDWARD gets out his cigarettes and lights one.

RICHARD

You should quit.

EDWARD

After this pack.
(He raises a hand)
Scout's honour.

He lights the cigarette.

Another knock at the door.

RICHARD

(calling out)
Coming.

EDWARD

I'll bet you say that to all the boys.

RICHARD

(as he walks out)
Charming.

EDWARD

So I've heard.

Beat.

EDWARD smokes, paces around the room, tries to make the space feel normal, doesn't really succeed.

He sits, smokes, waits.

*RICHARD re-enters, with **LINDSAY** in tow. She's a couple of years younger than the two men. She isn't wearing black.*

EDWARD stands.

RICHARD

(continuing their conversation as he
walks in)
I didn't think you'd be able to make it.

LINDSAY

I didn't either, it was all sort of last minute.

RICHARD

Better plans fall through?

LINDSAY

No.
(Beat.)
I mean...
Sort of.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

LINDSAY (cont'd)

(Beat.)

Sorry. That makes me sound shitty, doesn't it?

EDWARD

Yes.

Beat.

RICHARD

Shit, sorry.

Edward, Lindsay. Lindsay, Edward.

LINDSAY extends a hand.

LINDSAY

Hi.

EDWARD takes it, in something of an arch movement.

EDWARD

(cold)

Hi.

(Pause. He takes his hand back, blows smoke close to but not quite directly in her face.)

How do you know Richard?

LINDSAY

(unsure of how to proceed)

Through our...

Our mutual friend.

Beat.

EDWARD

I assumed.

LINDSAY

Okay...

(Beat.)

We lived together for a while actually. After university. A little while before he got together with Richard.

EDWARD

Well, he always did love Dick.

Pause.

LINDSAY takes a few steps away, looks over to RICHARD for support.

EDWARD

Where were you supposed to be today?

LINDSAY

(a little taken aback by his bluntness)
At my sister's wedding?

RICHARD

She's getting married?

LINDSAY

Yeah.
Hopefully.
(Beat.)
We think.
Hope.

RICHARD

Why aren't you there?

LINDSAY

Long story. Everything seems to be going wrong.

RICHARD

Who got cold feet? Her or him?

LINDSAY

Is it that obvious?

RICHARD

Everything else that goes wrong for a wedding can be fixed or airbrushed over. If one of the two key players is missing, they're a little more difficult to replace.

LINDSAY laughs a little at this.

LINDSAY

True.

RICHARD

So who went missing in action?

Beat.

LINDSAY

She did.

RICHARD

(in that slightly heightened, gossipy way)

No?
You can't be serious.

(CONTINUED)

LINDSAY

I am.

RICHARD

Did she say why?

LINDSAY

Not really. Left a note, but it was pretty tough to read. Scribbled out in a hurry, I think.

(Beat.)

But as soon as I knew for sure that things were staying put there for a while, I knew I had to come down here straight away.

RICHARD

I'm glad you did.

Beat.

LINDSAY

Thanks.

(Beat.)

I am too.

(Beat.)

Wish I could have made it to the funeral.

EDWARD

A lot of people managed to make it.

LINDSAY

Good.

I'm glad.

(Pause.)

What made the two of you stick around?

RICHARD

I just needed a little more time.

Beat.

EDWARD

Don't we all?

(Pause.)

I'm staying because I...

Want to.

(Beat.)

Or need to.

(Beat.)

Not quite sure which yet.

(Beat.)

Fag?

(CONTINUED)

LINDSAY

I'm fine, thanks.

EDWARD considers taking another, decides against it.

RICHARD

I'll have one.

EDWARD

Yeah?

RICHARD

I mean, if you're quitting after this pack, then really I'm helping to make you quit sooner.

EDWARD

(smiling a little)
Clever.

LINDSAY

Why are you quitting?

EDWARD

(gesturing to RICHARD)
Doctor's orders.

RICHARD

Something like that.

EDWARD

That reminds me, I should go and do my good deed for the day.

EDWARD exits.

Beat.

RICHARD

Sorry about Edward.
He can be a bit...
Unforgiving.

LINDSAY

It's okay.
(Beat.)
I don't blame him.
I felt terrible thinking I might not have been able to make it here for at least a little while.
(Beat.)
It was good of Catherine to let people stay here.
Good of her to stick to his wishes.

(CONTINUED)

RICHARD

Did you not think she would?

LINDSAY

I never know what to think with her.

RICHARD

Do you know her well?

LINDSAY

I think so.
I mean... I used to.
We sort of lost touch.

RICHARD

When?

LINDSAY

A while ago.
(Beat.)
Her and David were going through a rough patch, so I
guess it came from that.
(Pause.)
Everything okay?

RICHARD

Yeah. I guess.
(Beat.)
It's just...
That's the first time I've heard his name in a while.

LINDSAY

Really?

RICHARD

Yeah.
I mean, saying that now, it sounds...
I dunno.
But I just...
Haven't been able to say it.

Pause.

LINDSAY

I didn't know.
(Beat.)
I'm sorry.

RICHARD

Thanks.

*A short silence. The fact that David is gone seems
to linger between them for a moment.*

(CONTINUED)

EDWARD enters. He picks up on the tension.

EDWARD

Jesus. Who died?

LINDSAY and RICHARD both look at him, unsure whether to curse or to laugh.

Pause.

RICHARD

David.

Pause.

EDWARD

Yeah.
He did.

A short silence.

RICHARD

It doesn't feel real.
Still.

EDWARD

I know.
But the funeral was only a few days ago.

RICHARD

It feels like he's still here.

Pause.

LINDSAY

I think its something about the house.

EDWARD

You mean its haunted?

LINDSAY

I don't think that's the word I'd use.

(Beat.)

But... Yeah.

Sort of.

(Pause.)

I mean, he lived here for a long time. He'd never just pass through; he always came down for weeks at a time. He was always... Present.

Pause.

(CONTINUED)

EDWARD

I guess.
(Beat.)
But that all sounds a bit...
Weird. Don't you think?
A bit spooky, like a ghost story.

LINDSAY

I guess so.
Does that bother you?

EDWARD

I dunno.
I've never really thought about it.
About ghosts, I mean.

RICHARD

Really?

EDWARD

Really.
I've always tried not to.
Tried to stop thinking about...
After.

RICHARD

Of course.

EDWARD

Even when that sort of thing kept me up at night.
It would never be what comes after.
It would always just be...
The moment.
(Beat.)
The last moments.
(Pause.)
I wondered if I'd be able to sense it, see it coming a
mile away. Like those big signs on the side of the
road. You know, 60 miles to wherever.
But I never thought about what might happen once I got
there.
(Beat. Laughing to himself.)
At least my parents had religion.

LINDSAY

So do mine.

EDWARD

You never caught it?

LINDSAY

Nah. Catholic school.
They really hammer it out of you.

(CONTINUED)

EDWARD

So I've heard.

RICHARD

Everybody I know that went to catholic school came out of it an atheist.

EDWARD

How else did they come out?

RICHARD

Clever.

EDWARD

I try.
(Beat. Looking at LINDSAY)
What about you?

LINDSAY

What about me?

EDWARD

Come out at catholic school?

LINDSAY

(a little flustered)
Oh, no.
(Beat.)
I'm not -

RICHARD

She's straight.

EDWARD gasps in mock surprise, a hand to his mouth.

EDWARD

No.

RICHARD

They do exist you know.

EDWARD

I think they're a myth.
Can't remember the last time I met a straight person.

LINDSAY

Seriously?

EDWARD

Yeah.

(CONTINUED)

RICHARD

He's very discerning.

LINDSAY

That's one word for it.

Beat.

EDWARD

Meaning?

LINDSAY

Oh, nothing.

EDWARD

Okay.

(*Beat.* He's a little irritated)

It's not like I go out of my way to avoid them.

I just don't like it when they shove it in my face.

LINDSAY

Right.

A short silence.

EDWARD grabs his pack of cigarettes.

EDWARD

(to LINDSAY)

Fag?

LINDSAY

I'm fine. Thanks.

EDWARD

(to RICHARD)

Fag?

RICHARD

Queer?

(*Beat.*)

I'm good too, actually.

EDWARD

(*putting the pack back on the table*)

You lot are no fun.

RICHARD

Its 'cause I'm getting old.

EDWARD

(to LINDSAY)

What's your excuse?

(CONTINUED)

LINDSAY

I just don't smoke.
Never have.

EDWARD

Straight *and* you don't smoke?
What gets you going then?

RICHARD

When Lindsay says she "doesn't smoke," that's a bit of
an exaggeration.

EDWARD

(eyes lighting up)
Oh?

LINDSAY

(a little self-conscious)
Yeah...

RICHARD

I mean that's how she met David.

EDWARD

Seriously?

RICHARD

Yeah.
(To LINDSAY)
D'you wanna tell it?

LINDSAY

I mean, there's not much to tell.
(Beat.)
But back at uni, I used to...
(She laughs a little at herself)
God, it sounds ridiculous to say out loud.

EDWARD

Don't worry, I'm not a narc.

LINDSAY

Every now and then, I'd just sell on any excess weed I
had.

EDWARD

So you were a dealer?

LINDSAY

No, God no, it was never that serious.

(CONTINUED)

RICHARD

How do you end up with "excess weed" anyway?

LINDSAY

Well, if my parents were coming down or something and I didn't want it in my flat, I'd just sell it on.

EDWARD

You'd deal it.

LINDSAY

That's now how I'd phrase it.

EDWARD

D'you still deal?

LINDSAY

No.

I mean, I never dealt in the first place.

EDWARD

Fine, d'you still "sell on excess weed?"

LINDSAY

No.

Pause.

EDWARD

You don't...

EDWARD goes to check the hallway, to see if CATHERINE is around or in earshot. She isn't.

EDWARD

D'you have any on you?

RICHARD

(remonstrative)

Ed.

EDWARD

What?

RICHARD

You can't be serious.

EDWARD

Deadly serious.

RICHARD

(wincing a little at the phrasing)

Why?

(CONTINUED)

EDWARD

It's what he would have wanted.

Pause.

RICHARD

What?

(Beat.)

Did you...

Did you really just say that?

EDWARD nods, says nothing.

RICHARD

And you mean it?

EDWARD nods again.

Pause.

LINDSAY

Why d'you think that?

EDWARD

(shrugging)

'Cause.

RICHARD

(not satisfied)

'Cause...?

EDWARD

I knew him.

Pause.

LINDSAY

So did I.

EDWARD

Yeah, but not as well.

LINDSAY

You think?

EDWARD

Of course.

You couldn't have known him as well as I did. He never would've been himself around you.

(Beat.)

Well, not completely. He'd always be holding something back. Walking on eggshells.

(CONTINUED)

LINDSAY
Why?

EDWARD
'Cause you're straight.

LINDSAY is a little taken aback by this, a little offended.

RICHARD
Ed...
(EDWARD looks at him)
Don't start.

EDWARD
What's that supposed to mean.

RICHARD
(a little defeated)
Just...
(He sighs.)
Don't start.

Pause.

RICHARD sits down.

EDWARD
It's different with girls.
You just...
Always have to second guess yourself. Never wanting to be "too gay," or end up falling into the kind of boxes that straight girls want to put you into.
(Beat.)
If anybody uses the phrase "gay best friend" around me ever again, I'm going to scream.
(Pause.)
You could never know him as well as I did.

A short silence.

RICHARD
Neither could you.
I love him.
(He catches himself.)
Loved him.
(To himself)
Still doesn't feel right. Saying it in the past tense.

LINDSAY
But...
Your feelings haven't changed, have they?
Just because he's gone?

(CONTINUED)

RICHARD

Doesn't matter.
My feelings don't matter when...
(Pause.)
When there's nobody left to love.
(Pause. He steels himself a little.)
So don't say you know him best. You don't. You
couldn't.

EDWARD

(petulant)
Neither does she.

RICHARD

(trying to contain his anger)
Well I'm not talking to her.
Jesus, you're like a child. Always have been. Always
will be.

EDWARD

Whatever.

LINDSAY tries not to laugh at this.

The sound of movement upstairs.

LINDSAY

Is that...?

RICHARD nods.

LINDSAY

How is she?

EDWARD

Your guess is as good as mine.

LINDSAY

You haven't seen her?

RICHARD

No. She hasn't come down.

LINDSAY

What's she doing up there?

RICHARD

Who knows?

EDWARD

We thought about going up to talk to her.
To ask if we could smoke here.
(Beat.)
But we didn't.

(CONTINUED)

LINDSAY
Why not?

EDWARD
Worried she wouldn't let me smoke.

LINDSAY
Right.

Pause.

EDWARD
All this talk of it is making me want one.
Anyone else?

RICHARD
So you've moved away from the idea of buying drugs?

EDWARD
Not exactly. Just sort of parked it for a while.

RICHARD
Wonderful.

EDWARD
I'm sure Lindsay could get us some. She's got form
after all.

LINDSAY
Fuck off.

RICHARD
Surprised it took you that long to start swearing.
Especially around Ed.

EDWARD
Charming.

RICHARD
I'm just saying, you can be a bit...

LINDSAY
Unforgiving?

RICHARD
Yeah.

Pause.

EDWARD

(lighting a cigarette)
No.
(Beat.)
I'm not unforgiving.

RICHARD

Then what would you call it?

EDWARD

Honest.

LINDSAY scoffs at this.

EDWARD

What's wrong with that?

LINDSAY

Honesty is just an excuse that people use for being shitty.

EDWARD

Since when?

LINDSAY

Since always.

(Beat.)

Everybody talks about "brutal honesty" like its something to be proud of.

EDWARD

And it isn't?

LINDSAY

Obviously fucking not.

(RICHARD smiles a little)

Honesty doesn't need to be brutal. It's possible to be honest with someone without dragging them across coals or kicking them when they're down.

EDWARD

(feeling a little combative)

You're mixing your images a little there.

LINDSAY

(ignoring him, pressing on)

It just gets used as a way to justify cruelty.

Sometimes its minor; when you're "just being honest" about the way someone looks in a certain outfit, or about the song they sing a little off-key at karaoke when they're pissed.

Or it becomes a way for you to poke holes in a person's relationship.

Or the memory of someone that they're close to. Lets you invalidate it and make it seem less than, because you're "just being honest" about the fact that you were closer, that you meant more to them, or they meant more to you.

(Pause.)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

LINDSAY (cont'd)

So I don't want or need your honesty. Because you're not being honest.

Pause.

EDWARD lights another cigarette.

EDWARD

(barely audible)

Bitch.

Pause.

LINDSAY moves towards EDWARD. There's violence in the air.

LINDSAY

(dismissive)

Typical.

Using your being gay as a cover for hating women.

(Beat.)

I wish I could say I was surprised.

Pause.

EDWARD

Fuck you.

LINDSAY

You're not my type.

EDWARD

(sarcastic)

I'm devastated by that.

RICHARD

(quietly)

Enough.

Beat.

The others both look at him.

RICHARD

Enough.

A short silence.

RICHARD

This is difficult enough without the two of you at each others throats.

(Beat.)

I need a cigarette.

(CONTINUED)

He gets up, moves over to EDWARD and takes a cigarette. EDWARD lights it.

RICHARD

Thanks.

Pause.

They smoke.

RICHARD looks at LINDSAY, smiling in a way that suggests complicity.

LINDSAY

Go on then.

(To EDWARD)

You don't mind, do you?

EDWARD

The more the merrier.

Besides, other people smoking them helps me quit.

LINDSAY

Really?

EDWARD

Yeah, this is my last pack. Then I'm going cold turkey.

RICHARD

(unconvinced)

Yeah, right.

EDWARD

You don't think I can do it?

RICHARD

For better or worse, you've never been a quitter.

EDWARD

True.

When is that bad?

LINDSAY

When it stops you from quitting smoking?

Under the following dialogue, the sound of footsteps can be vaguely heard, descending a staircase. None of the three notice this.

EDWARD

She's quick.

LINDSAY

(a little irritated)

Yes, she is.

(Beat.)

I think that's the first nice thing you've said to me.

(Beat.)

Thanks.

RICHARD

Normally he's not that quick to be nice to people.

RICHARD

(a little irritated)

No, he isn't.

LINDSAY smiles at him a little.

***CATHERINE** is standing in the doorway. In her sixties, age and loss are beginning to catch up with her, cracks showing beneath the surface of something that was once perfectly maintained. She's wearing black.*

CATHERINE

Please don't smoke in my house.

A very long silence.

All three of the others look at each other, seeming to share the same thought for a second: "oh shit."

Slowly, their eyes move and clock her standing in the doorway.

Only EDWARD is still smoking, but the others haven't put out their cigarettes yet.

RICHARD

I didn't hear you coming down.

CATHERINE

I gathered.

Her gaze drifts to RICHARD'S cigarette. He notices this. Slowly, he moves towards a table and stubs the cigarette out in an ashtray.

LINDSAY follows suit.

EDWARD doesn't.

EDWARD and CATHERINE look at each other. There's no love lost between them; never has been, never will be.

CATHERINE

Do you mind?

EDWARD

I do, actually.

(Reaching for his pack, offering it up to CATHERINE)
Where are my manners? Want one?

RICHARD

Ed...

Beat.

CATHERINE

I didn't realise I was asking too much of you.

EDWARD

No?

(He waits for a reply, gets none.)

Why are you wearing black?

RICHARD and LINDSAY look at each other for a second, sharing a concern: "what happens next?"

EDWARD walks over to the ashtray. He takes a long, satisfied drag of his cigarette. He blows smoke in CATHERINE'S direction. Finally, he stubs out what's left of the cigarette.

CATHERINE

Thank you.

BLACKOUT

Scene 3

A little while later.

All four people are sat around, drinking tea. It almost seems civilized. Almost.

They drink in silence. There's still some tension in the air.

LINDSAY

I'm sorry I couldn't make it.

CATHERINE looks at her for a second. The men look away.

(CONTINUED)

LINDSAY

To the funeral, I mean.

CATHERINE

Not everyone could.

LINDSAY

I know.

(Pause. Slightly awkward, feels like she should say more.)

But still...

Sorry.

CATHERINE

Thank you.

They fall into silence again.

LINDSAY

My sister's getting married.

CATHERINE looks at her again.

RICHARD laughs a little under his breath, but falls into silence when CATHERINE shoots a glance at him, a scolded kid at school.

LINDSAY

That's why I couldn't make it.

My sister's getting married.

(Pause.)

Hopefully.

CATHERINE

Hopefully?

LINDSAY

Yeah, she... She sort of...

LINDSAY can't find the right way to phrase it.

EDWARD

Ran for the hills.

LINDSAY looks at him, admonishing in a way that's similar to CATHERINE.

LINDSAY

Yeah.

Something like that.

(Pause.)

So I wanted to come down here. To see you.

(Beat.)

To see you.

CATHERINE

Thank you.

(Pause.)

And I hope your sister does get married.

I always liked her.

EDWARD

(under his breath)

Shocking.

RICHARD

Ed.

EDWARD

What?

CATHERINE looks at him.

EDWARD

I'm just saying...

He struggles to find the words.

CATHERINE

Yes?

Pause.

EDWARD

Never mind.

Doesn't matter.

Pause.

CATHERINE

Okay.

Silence.

LINDSAY

Is it okay if I stay here tonight?

Or for a couple of days?

CATHERINE

There's not much room.

RICHARD

Ed and I can share a room. We'll sleep in...

He doesn't know how to finish the sentence.

(CONTINUED)

CATHERINE

(with weight, though she tries to hide this)

In the extra room.

RICHARD

Yeah.

(Pause.)

The extra room.

You don't mind, do you Ed?

EDWARD

Nah, 'course not.

You just want an excuse to get me into bed.

RICHARD

Damn, you finally outed me.

EDWARD laughs a little too loudly, trying to cover up the tension.

CATHERINE scoffs. It's quiet, but EDWARD notices it.

RICHARD

You don't mind sleeping on the sofa, do you?

LINDSAY

No, not at all.

Pause.

RICHARD looks briefly from EDWARD to CATHERINE and back again.

RICHARD

(to CATHERINE)

Is that okay with you?

Pause.

EDWARD and CATHERINE both look at him.

RICHARD

Ed and I...?

He's too embarrassed to finish the question, there's something adolescent about the way he carries himself.

CATHERINE murmurs a nonverbal "Yes."

This time ED scoffs, but he doesn't try to disguise the volume.

(CONTINUED)

CATHERINE looks at him, almost confrontational, but not quite.

EDWARD

(to RICHARD)
Did you really ask that?
If it was okay?

RICHARD

(trying to avoid conflict)
I mean, we're guests...

EDWARD

And that means self-censorship?
I'm fine with the not smoking -

CATHERINE

(curtly)
Thank you.

EDWARD

- but that was fucking stupid.

CATHERINE

Language.

EDWARD

What about it?

CATHERINE

Is it too much to ask that you don't curse?
(A little disdainful, but again, she tries to contain it)
Or is that self-censorship?

Pause.

EDWARD

Why are you wearing black?

CATHERINE seems taken aback by this: why ask a question when the answer is so obvious?

CATHERINE

Mourning.

Pause.

RICHARD

"I am in mourning for life. I am unhappy."

CATHERINE

Chekhov.

(Pause.)

I'm not in mourning for life.

Pause.

RICHARD

I know.

Neither am I.

EDWARD

But why are you wearing black?

It was basically his last request.

(Pause.)

When he...

When he knew.

The one thing he asked was that people not wear black.

It was right there in bright colours on the tacky
fucking email invite he sent before he went bsck to
hospital.

"Don't wear black."

(Pause.)

I'm not surprised. Why would anyone expect you to
actually honour his wishes?*A very long silence.**CATHERINE tries as best she can to hide how much
this hurts.*

CATHERINE

(barely audible)

I couldn't.

(Pause)

I couldn't do that.

It isn't about his last wishes.

(Pause.)

It isn't about him.

EDWARD

Of course it fucking isn't.

CATHERINE

When you mourn, you wear black.

I always have. Always will.

And when I go, people will wear black.

(Pause.)

It's the only colour that...

Fits. Because its deep, dark, endless.

(Pause.)

Like grieving.

It isn't something you can dress up or hide in bright

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CATHERINE (cont'd)
colours. It just...
Is.
(Pause.)
And always will be.

A long silence.

LINDSAY
It doesn't have to be.

Pause.

CATHERINE looks at her.

LINDSAY
I just mean that...
I remember why he didn't want anyone wearing black.

EDWARD
Oh?

LINDSAY
When we were at uni together, we had this lecturer.
She was...
I don't know the right words for her, not really.
(Beat.)
She was in her fifties when she taught us, on the way
to sixty. But she always seemed so...
(aware of the weight that this word carries)
Alive.
(Pause.)
She talked about her past a lot. Long-standing
friendships with other lecturers. The occasional feud
with a student she worked with. Meeting Beckett.
(Pause.)
And she had to miss a class once. It wasn't an
important class, early in the term. But she had to miss
a class because a friend passed away, and she had to go
back home for the funeral.
She told us about it the next week, when she came back.
(Pause.)
She said it wasn't sad. She said that nobody was
wearing black. She said that it was a celebration of
life; of what had been, instead of what they'd lost.
(Pause.)
You could tell that it hurt. That she was carrying the
weight of that loss, that she always would be.
(Pause.)
She said her friend was bright. Vibrant. Alive. Like
she was. And so that's what the service was like.
(Pause.)
And across from this big rectangular table the class

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

LINDSAY (cont'd)

was sat around, enthralled by the way that our old lecturer told us stories about the past, and what it was like seeing people for the first time in almost a decade, David looked at me.

And there was...

(Pause.)

There was something in his eyes, or in the way that he smiled, that told me that... When his time came, that's what he wanted. To be remembered, not to be lost.

A long silence.

EDWARD

I didn't know that.

Pause.

CATHERINE

He never told me about that.

LINDSAY

I know.

He used to...

Tell me all the things he wanted to tell you.

Wished he could tell you.

(Pause.)

He always wanted come home more than he did. Even after graduation. Even after he and I lost touch, I knew.

Knew that sometimes he wanted to come back here.

But he couldn't.

EDWARD

I don't blame him.

Pause.

CATHERINE

Why?

EDWARD

Because -

RICHARD

It's difficult.

EDWARD

That's one word for it.

RICHARD

Sometimes it's difficult to...

To feel safe.

(CONTINUED)

CATHERINE

Even here?

RICHARD nods.

RICHARD

When was the first time he told you he was seeing someone?

CATHERINE

A long time ago.

RICHARD

How old was he?

CATHERINE

Nineteen.

He'd been away for a while.

(Pause.)

Told me that there was someone he wanted me to meet. Someone important to him.

(To LINDSAY)

I thought it might have been you.

LINDSAY suppresses laughter at this.

CATHERINE

But it wasn't.

LINDSAY

He told me about that.

He was so scared.

RICHARD

So was I.

When we got together, things that I'd heard...

(Pause.)

Well...

They didn't make this seem like the most welcoming place.

So there were lots of flying visits. Trying not to stay overnight.

Anything to avoid a conversation around sleeping arrangements.

(Pause. To CATHERINE.)

What would you have said?

(She says nothing.)

Yeah.

That's what I thought.

(Pause.)

You never said anything.

(CONTINUED)

CATHERINE

(angry)
Neither did he.

EDWARD

He couldn't.
That's the difference.

CATHERINE

He could.
He could always come to me.

EDWARD

I don't believe you.

LINDSAY

Come on...

EDWARD

What?

LINDSAY

You're not being fair.

EDWARD

Trust me, I am.

LINDSAY

You barely know her.

EDWARD

Fine.
You two know her -

CATHERINE

I have a name.

EDWARD

Catherine, better than I do.
Are you surprised she was kept in the dark for so long?

A long silence.

*They both want to say something, but know that it
wouldn't be true.*

EDWARD

Exactly.
(Pause.)
Fuck this, I'm going for a fag.
(To RICHARD)
Coming?

(CONTINUED)

RICHARD looks around the table, considers this.

RICHARD

Yeah, sure.

They exit.

A long silence.

LINDSAY

I'm sorry.

She waits for a response, gets none.

LINDSAY

Are you...

Are you okay?

(Pause.)

It just...

I haven't asked that yet.

(Pause.)

I'm sorry.

CATHERINE

Thank you for asking.

(Pause.)

But no.

I'm not okay.

(Pause.)

I don't think I ever will be.

LINDSAY doesn't know what to say.

LINDSAY

I miss him.

(Pause.)

We sort of...

We lost touch, near the end.

It was hard for both of us.

We'd first met when we were young, when everything was in front of us.

To see that change...

It was hard.

(Pause.)

He never changed though.

In spite of everything, he never changed.

Still laughing at all the wrong things. Still vibrant.

(Pause.)

I saw him once, near the end. It had been a while.

But it was like nothing changed. We picked up where we left off; he was holding court like it was the easiest thing in the world.

(Pause.)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

LINDSAY (cont'd)

He never looked sad.

I know he was. And he knew that I knew; after knowing each other for as long as we have, you get a sense for these things.

(She catches herself using the present tense but doesn't correct it)

I'm glad I got to see him. And see that was still... Himself.

A short silence.

CATHERINE

I always liked you.

(Pause.)

I used to think you'd end up together.

(A little severe.)

Don't laugh.

She doesn't.

CATHERINE

Silly, I know.

(Pause.)

I saw him more near the end than I ever had before.

He couldn't wait to leave.

Went to university on the other end of the country.

LINDSAY

There was a club called Heroes that he used to go.

I don't know if he ever told you about it.

CATHERINE

He didn't.

LINDSAY

Right.

(Pause.)

He took me there once. Told me to be make myself butch for it so the bouncers didn't think I was straight.

I don't remember much about the night; it was so long ago, and the drinks were so cheap.

But when we were waiting for the bus at the end of the night, he just repeated the name under his breath a few times. Like a mantra.

Heroes. Heroes. Heroes.

(Pause.)

I think he thought that everyone in there was a hero, in their way.

Looking back, I think he was right.

(Pause.)

We sang Bowie at the back of the bus.

(CONTINUED)

Pause.

CATHERINE
Thank you.

LINDSAY
What for?

CATHERINE
For telling me this.
For telling me about him.
(Pause.)
There's so much I didn't know.
So much I'll never know.

The men re-enter, sitting in silence.

CATHERINE
How was it?

RICHARD
Good.

EDWARD
Yeah.
(Beat.)
Good.

CATHERINE
I miss smoking.

EDWARD
You should be glad you quit.
I'm trying to.

RICHARD
Again.

EDWARD
Yes, again.
But still, I'm trying.

CATHERINE
It's hard.

EDWARD
Yeah.
It is.

CATHERINE
My husband used to smoke.

(CONTINUED)

RICHARD

Really?

CATHERINE

Yes.

LINDSAY

I didn't know that.
I never met him.

RICHARD

Me neither.

CATHERINE

He passed away when David was young.

EDWARD

Was it the smoking?

CATHERINE

No.

But I can't say that it helped.

(Pause.)

That's one of the things that helped me quit.

Not that smoking was bad for him, or that it was bad
for me. We both knew that it wasn't healthy, but we
still did it.

No...

(Beat.)

The thing that helped me quit was not having anybody to
smoke with any more.*Pause.*

EDWARD

I'm sorry.

(Pause.)

I know how you feel.

I used to smoke with David sometimes.

*CATHERINE looks at him in that
concerned/judgmental way that comes with finding
out your child smoked.*

EDWARD

Not often. But sometimes.

Feels strange doing it now.

Pause.

CATHERINE

It's the smell.

That's where the memory is.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CATHERINE (cont'd)

In the smell of cigarettes, the way it lingers on things. On clothes, or furniture. On fingertips.
(Pause.)

That's why I tell people not to smoke in the house. The smell will get in things again. His smell.

Pause.

EDWARD

I didn't know.

CATHERINE

No, you didn't. But you couldn't help that.

EDWARD

I'm sorry.

CATHERINE

Thank you.

Pause.

EDWARD offers her a cigarette.

EDWARD

Fag?

CATHERINE smiles for a moment.

BLACKOUT

Scene 4

Late night/early morning. Light comes in from the hallway.

EDWARD is sprawled across the sofa, a little drunk.

EDWARD

(singing, quietly at first but getting louder as he goes on)

Walk on through the wind,
Walk on through the rain,
Though your dreams be tossed and blown.
Walk on, walk on,
With hope in your heart,
And you'll never walk alone.
(quietly again, aware he's being too loud)
You'll never walk alone.

The sound of footsteps descending the stairs.

(CONTINUED)

EDWARD

(a little melodramatic)
Who goes there?

RICHARD edges into the room, looking like he wants to chide EDWARD, but he can't quite bring himself to do it.

EDWARD brings his hands together to form a pistol.

EDWARD

Your money or your life?

RICHARD

(A little terse, but still raising his hands)
Ladies choice.

EDWARD

(lowering his "pistol")
Clever.

RICHARD turns on a light.

RICHARD

What are you playing at?

EDWARD

(looking at his hands)
This thing?

RICHARD

No, getting in this late.

EDWARD

Alright dad, calm down.

RICHARD

We're guests.

EDWARD

So?

RICHARD

So, show some respect.

EDWARD scoffs.

EDWARD

Because she shows us so much respect?
(Pause.)
Exactly.

(CONTINUED)

RICHARD

It's different.
She's older.

EDWARD

That's not an excuse.

RICHARD

I know.

Pause.

EDWARD

I thought Lindsay would be down here.

RICHARD

When you didn't come back, she just took the bedroom
with me.

EDWARD

Good thing you're not one to kiss and tell.

RICHARD

Something like that.
Besides, she's not my type.

EDWARD

You have a type?

RICHARD

Wondering if you tick my boxes?

EDWARD

Obviously.

Pause.

RICHARD

Coffee?

EDWARD

Yeah.
(Beat.)
Please.

RICHARD exits.

EDWARD

(calling out)
Cheers.

RICHARD

(off)

No problem.

The sound of movement upstairs, quiet but perceptible.

EDWARD paces, trying to stay steady, humming 'You'll Never Walk Alone.'

He sits down on the sofa.

He gets out his cigarettes, opens them. Takes one out, considers it in great detail. Thinks about lighting it, for the smell rather than for the act of smoking itself. He puts the cigarette back in the pack, and the pack back in a pocket.

He lies down on the sofa, looking at the ceiling. It spins a little. He puts one foot on the ground, breathes deeply, steadies himself.

RICHARD enters with two drinks. He puts them on a table.

RICHARD

Yours is in the Union Jack mug.

EDWARD

Really? A Union Jack mug? People still use those.

RICHARD

Old people do.

EDWARD

We're old.

RICHARD

Not really.

EDWARD

Well, we're not young.
Haven't been for a while.

RICHARD

True.

EDWARD

But we're not old either?

RICHARD

I don't think so.

(CONTINUED)

EDWARD thinks about this for a second, in the way that the slightly drunk do when it comes to abstract ideas.

EDWARD

Then...
What are we?

RICHARD

No age.
(Beat.)
That's always what people say when somebody our age dies.
"It's no age."

EDWARD

Yeah.
(Pause.)
Yeah.

A short silence.

RICHARD

Where did you go?

EDWARD

Out.

RICHARD

Didn't realise there was much of an "out" around here for you to go to.

EDWARD

My phone begs to differ.

RICHARD

You didn't?

EDWARD

I did.

RICHARD

Why?

EDWARD

(shrugging)
Bored. Wanted to.

RICHARD

Did you...?

EDWARD

Did I....?

RICHARD can't quite bring himself to answer.

EDWARD

Did I tell the person I'm infected?

RICHARD

I wish you wouldn't say that.

EDWARD

Why? It's true.

That's what I am.

Infected.

(Pause.)

I told them.

I always do.

(Pause.)

Gives them a chance to change their mind.

RICHARD

And did they?

EDWARD

No.

Not this time.

A short silence.

EDWARD gets his coffee, takes a sip.

EDWARD

You can almost taste the nationalism.

RICHARD

How is it?

EDWARD

Leaves a little to be desired.

It's bitter, like the coffee. But not in a way that works. Just bitter in the sense of "ugh, why am I drinking this" kind of bitter.

RICHARD

Must be an acquired taste.

EDWARD

Yeah. Must be.

I wonder how you acquire it? A taste for nationalism.

(CONTINUED)

RICHARD

You must need to have the country on your side.

EDWARD

I wonder that's like.

RICHARD

Who knows?

Pause.

The sound of footsteps descending the stairs.

RICHARD picks up on it, but EDWARD doesn't; he's somewhere else, sipping his coffee.

CATHERINE enters.

RICHARD

Hi.

CATHERINE

Hello.

EDWARD looks up at her and this brings him crashing back to the present.

EDWARD

Shit.

RICHARD

Charming.

EDWARD

Always.

Pause.

RICHARD

Couldn't sleep?

CATHERINE

No.

RICHARD

I'm sorry.

CATHERINE

You?

RICHARD

Oh, I slept fine, until someone came in and start belting out *Carousel*.

EDWARD

I wasn't belting. You're just a light sleeper.

RICHARD

True.
Lindsay's out like a light.

CATHERINE

Lucky.

RICHARD

Yeah.

Pause.

EDWARD

(brandishing the Union Jack mug at
CATHERINE)
What's the deal with this?

CATHERINE

(a little confused)
It's... A mug.

EDWARD

But why does it have this on it?

CATHERINE

It just does.

EDWARD

You don't get a lot of nationalist crockery these days.

RICHARD

I don't think that's technically crockery.

CATHERINE

And it isn't nationalist.

*EDWARD shrugs, not exactly content, but without
the energy to continue the argument. He finishes
his coffee.*

EDWARD

(to RICHARD)
Thanks for the coffee.

RICHARD

No problem.
You needed it.

(CONTINUED)

EDWARD

Probably.

CATHERINE

Why *Carousel*?

EDWARD

Sorry?

CATHERINE

Why come in singing *Carousel*?

EDWARD

Oh, right.

(Beat.)

I've always liked it, I guess.

Especially that song.

My parents knew it from football. I knew it from the musical.

Sometimes it brought us together.

Stopped us from feeling alone.

CATHERINE

It's a lovely song.

EDWARD

Yeah, it is.

Pause.

CATHERINE

David always loved it.

RICHARD

Yeah, he did.

He sang it well.

CATHERINE

He always had a good voice.

EDWARD

I never really heard him sing.

Not properly anyway. Just in that drunk, 'Heaven is a Place on Earth' just came on in the club kind of way.

CATHERINE

He was in a production of *Carousel* when he was in school.

This would have been before you knew him.

(Pause.)

It was a little while after my husband died. It had only been a few months. I was worried about David going back to school too quickly, worried that maybe he

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CATHERINE (cont'd)

hadn't taken all the time he needed to grieve.

(Pause.)

The two of them never really got on too well. David knew that his father wasn't happy with how David turned out.

(Pause.)

Sensitive.

That's the word that got used to describe him. He's "sensitive," different to the other boys.

That worried me.

I was scared for him.

(Pause.)

You know what boys can be like.

Pause.

RICHARD

We know what parents can be like too.

EDWARD

I don't.

CATHERINE

What do you mean?

EDWARD

I never came out to my parents.

I couldn't.

CATHERINE

(curious, but still approaching the question with trepidation)

Why?

EDWARD

I'd waited too long. And then...

Well, then I got a diagnosed.

And that, as they say, was the ball game.

You can't really go "hey guys, I know I've been distant for almost a decade but it's only because I can't work out how to tell you that I'm gay. P.S.: I have H.I.V."

(Pause.)

Well, you couldn't with my parents.

(Pause.)

I know how they'd look at me.

They wouldn't be concerned, wouldn't think about my health, my safety, anything like that.

They'd look at me like they always knew, that I'd always do something like this.

(Pause.)

Like it was my fault.

(Pause.)

It wasn't.

(CONTINUED)

RICHARD

I know.

EDWARD

It wasn't my fault.

RICHARD moves over to him, places a hand on his shoulder.

RICHARD

I know.

I know.

A very long silence.

EDWARD

It wasn't my fault.

(Pause.)

It just...

Happened.

Nothing's ever 100% effective.

RICHARD

I know.

A very long silence.

CATHERINE

I'm sorry.

(Pause.)

I didn't know.

I mean, David never told me.

(Pause.)

That probably doesn't surprise you.

EDWARD

Not really.

RICHARD

Did David ever come out?

CATHERINE

Not really.

Not with words.

(Pause.)

He brought someone home once.

He'd built it up for a while, he knew that I always asked after his personal life. After all, I'd never really known him to be with any girls.

So he sort of...

He strung me along.

(Pause.)

I think he thought that, if I knew from the beginning

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CATHERINE (cont'd)

it was a man he was bringing home, that I wouldn't be welcoming.

(Beat.)

I think he was right.

(Pause.)

This was after his father passed away. David never would have brought anyone home when he was alive.

(Pause.)

I don't blame him.

(To RICHARD.)

Do your parents know?

RICHARD

Yeah.

They have for ages.

As soon as I knew, I told them.

(Pause.)

I knew it would be scary.

Dangerous, even.

But I also knew I had to tell them.

CATHERINE

Why?

RICHARD

My parents were never the most progressive of people.

But they weren't all that conservative either.

This was a little before *Brookside*. So nobody had ever really seen gayness before, not really.

But they'd heard about it.

(Pause.)

Never in glowing terms.

Which is why I was scared.

I thought my parents would end up afraid for me, convinced I'd end up hurt or ill or worse.

(Pause.)

We were all sat down watching TV. I can't remember what. But I do remember that when everybody's around the TV, it gets taken very seriously. All questions or concerns were saved for the adverts.

(Pause.)

So, during the adverts for whatever we were watching, I was slowly building up the courage to tell them. To come out.

Lots of ummm-ing and ahhh-ing and stopping and starting. But the breaks weren't very long so I knew I had to try and get it out.

And I did; I can't remember how I put it. I might have said something like "I don't think I like girls," or even asked if what I felt was normal. Not that they'd ever be able to answer that question.

(Pause.)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

RICHARD (cont'd)

I managed to get it out just as the adverts ended. I thought they'd just sit in silence. But they didn't. They talked over the TV for what might have been the first time.

It was a long conversation. And I could tell they weren't entirely accepting. There was something in the tone of the questions, avoiding my eye-contact, little tics that told me that this wasn't something that they fully understood, or approved of.

But I didn't need them to approve.

I just needed them to know. The rest didn't really matter much.

(Pause.)

After that, we didn't talk about it much. But sometimes that look in their eyes changed, and I thought that we might end up being okay. But I never asked. Neither did they.

We just sort of kept going, as if nothing had changed. Even when I started to bring guys home, we never really talked about it. Sometimes Dad would leave out copies of things he'd read in the paper; most of it scaremongering crap, some of it actually helpful.

But still, we never talked.

They never told me that they were okay.

(Pause.)

For a long time, that bugged me. Like I did something wrong. But I got older, and they got older, and I moved out.

And it was fine. I didn't need them to tell me they were okay with it because sometimes... Sometimes I could just tell.

Pause.

EDWARD

You're lucky.

RICHARD

I know.

EDWARD

Not everybody can be so sure that they'll be safe when they bring up something like that.

RICHARD

I know.

EDWARD

I think you can tell, sometimes.

Like, from the energy of a place. Whether or not feels safe.

(He looks around.)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

EDWARD (cont'd)
Like this place.
(Pause.)
You can tell.

He looks at CATHERINE, wondering if she'll say anything. She doesn't.

RICHARD
I think you're right.

Pause.

CATHERINE
Do you still talk to your parents?

RICHARD
Yeah.

CATHERINE
Are you close?

RICHARD
As close we can be, all things considered.

CATHERINE
And they still haven't told you...?

RICHARD
No.

CATHERINE
I'm sorry.
(Pause.)
Do you want them to?

RICHARD
Sometimes, I guess.
I don't really think about it.

CATHERINE
No?

RICHARD
No.

CATHERINE
They do.
They think about it.
(Pause.)
Or at least they will if they're anything like me.

(CONTINUED)

EDWARD

Is that a good thing?

CATHERINE

David and I never really talked about it.

I mean, he didn't even bring anyone home until after he moved out.

I guess it wasn't really home then.

(Pause.)

I know what I didn't wasn't right or fair.

But saying that now doesn't erase it.

(Pause.)

I know I was a bad mother.

I failed him.

I didn't know it at the time...

(Pause.)

I thought I was just looking out for him.

I just wanted him to be safe. To be okay.

(Pause.)

To not get sick.

(Pause.)

I just wanted him to be normal.

(Pause.)

I never really knew if all of those things added up to me wanting him to be happy.

Imagine that. Not even knowing if you want your son to be happy.

(Pause.)

When he told me, I knew that I'd lost him. Or at least a part of him. There was a gap between us that we wouldn't be able to close.

I couldn't cross the distance, even when he offered a hand to help me make it over.

(Pause.)

And when I wasn't looking, the world started changing. Mostly for the better.

But David and I still didn't talk much, and when we did, it was never about his love life.

I never asked about it.

(Pause.)

And now I can't ask. I'll never know if he was happy.

A long silence.

RICHARD

He was.

For a long time.

EDWARD

Even near the end, he was happy.

Pause.

(CONTINUED)

CATHERINE

Was he scared.

Pause.

EDWARD

Yeah.

But who wouldn't be?

RICHARD

Near the end, he started seeing people more often, telling people to come and visit.

So they did.

Lots of people came to see him; people who had known him forever, or only for a little while, but people still came to see him.

They wanted to hear stories about when he was young in Manchester, hear him tell inappropriate gallows humour jokes.

Pause.

EDWARD

In the end, nobody was in the room with him when he passed.

But he wasn't alone.

(Pause.)

I never really know what I believe happens in the end.

If there's anything after.

I hope there is.

(Pause.)

But after a while, you get so used to seeing people get sick, or just fade away, that you start hoping that there's something. Because they deserve more.

I don't know if it's turning to religion, or something else.

(Pause.)

But I think at the end, even with nobody else in there, he could feel the presence of the people who had come to visit him.

Like they were there to help guide him to wherever he needed to go next.

CATHERINE

I lost him twice.

Nobody should have to go through that.

(Pause.)

They always say that you should never have to say goodbye to your child. And anyone who says that is right.

There's something gone, something that I won't be able to get back.

(Pause.)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CATHERINE (cont'd)

And that already happened once, back when he was
younger, when he tried to tell me about how he felt.
About who he was.

(Pause.)

And I lost him then.

And now I've lost him again.

EDWARD

Just because he's gone...

(Beat.)

It doesn't mean that you've lost him.

Hold on to him. What you had.

(Pause.)

And what you wanted to.

Talk to him.

When you're ready to.

CATHERINE

I'm scared about what he'll say back to me.

RICHARD

Me too.

EDWARD

Me too.

(Pause.)

But...

In the end, it doesn't matter what he says.

As long as I get to hear his voice again.

Fade to black.

End of play.