

Scene One

United Kingdom.

The near future.

Oliver's home. Council. Neglected.

Dawn.

The faint hum of the city, before rush hour.

On the wall, an entry intercom.

OLIVER, eighty one, in bed. A shape under the sheet. Absolutely still.

After a while, OLIVER stirs. From beneath the sheet a frail arm reaches out.

A few seconds.

An alarm goes off by the bed, a little radio clock. A boppy French pop song, cheerful, dated, incongruous in the gloom.

The arm gropes, stops the sound.

Silence.

OLIVER shifts upright, swings his legs over the side of the bed. It's not easy for him.

He wears a long nightshirt, filthy.

He's very thin.

Both his legs are bandaged thickly from knee to toe.

He sits for a while.

He shuffles forward and eases himself off the bed.

As his feet hit the floor, he screams.

Then he swallows it. Remembers. He breathes deeply.

He waits for the pain to be familiar.

He looks down at his wrecked body.

A car horn sounds outside, close by. OLIVER listens.

Until the noise subsides

OLIVER hobbles towards the door. His walking is painful, awkward.

The intercom on the wall sounds suddenly – a staggered, ugly buzzing – a loose connection.

OLIVER stops, turns, confused.

A faint crackle.

Silence.

He exits.

Another buzz. The intercom crackles briefly, sputters out.

LUCY enters.

She's eighteen, slight, pretty, boyish clothes. A hoodie too big for her. A shoulder bag.

She looks around. Casually she flicks the light switch.

Sudden brightness. She flicks the light off quickly – hadn't expected that.

She listens.

Nothing.

She goes to a drawer and opens it.

She rummages through, unimpressed.

She takes out a bottle of clear liquid, opens it and sniffs. Her head jerks back violently.

She dares herself to do it again, at a distance.

She replaces the bottle.

She thinks.

She takes the bottle out of the drawer and pockets it.

She takes out a glasses case, opens it, wipes the spectacles and puts them on.

She squints, puts her hands out and feels her way forward like a blind person.

She spins round and round, arms flapping.

She might take off. She wants to take off.

Round and round...

OLIVER *enters. He wears a long, tatty dressing gown, in his hand a tin of condensed milk.*

He sees LUCY. Stops. Stares.

LUCY *sees OLIVER, and stops. Dizzy. She falls over.*

Beat.

LUCY *picks herself up.*

OLIVER Are you the lady with the books?

LUCY *stares at him.*

Pause.

OLIVER You're not the lady with the books.

I didn't think so. She hasn't come for... five months? A year?

He loses track.

And she was older.

Beat.

Maybe sixty. And she was fat. She looked like a sausage.

And it wasn't always her. Sometimes it was another lady. Same age? White hair though, not red. Your hair isn't white or red, I'm not saying it is. She was a sour bitch the one with white hair. You couldn't get two words out of her.

Sometimes it was a black man. Funny man, he wasn't like a black man. All this funny hair, like a rainbow. He must've had some flak. I think he was Jamaican. Or Nigerian. He used to call me "darling".

He laughs. Coughs.

I have never been anyone's darling, Boy. Let alone a black man's darling.

Silence.

LUCY What's wrong with your legs?

OLIVER *looks down.*

LUCY What books?

OLIVER I didn't like the last lot. Some of them were bloody silly. One bloody silly story about some woman detective. Rising up through the—

A dismissive wave of his hand.

It didn't make any sense. Bloody stupid cow. I don't like women writers.

LUCY Actually I didn't think anyone'd be here. Didn't think anyone was left.

There's a woman up top, but she
Can't go anywhere.

OLIVER Forgive me. I haven't spoken for so long.

LUCY I think I have to leave—

The sudden blaring of a car horn outside.

A young man screams faintly. Angry.

A distant shot, maybe a gun.

LUCY and OLIVER *both afraid.*

Silence.

LUCY I don't have any books.

Beat.

Why didn't they relocate you?

OLIVER You think they've forgotten?

LUCY What? The books, or—
Didn't you get a letter?

OLIVER Faaaaaagh. "Letter".
(*dismissive*) Fucking "letter". I get *nothing*.
I may have had—
(*confused*) I remember you.
Didn't you used to come here as a little girl?

LUCY No.

OLIVER Little scrap of a thing.

LUCY Not me.

OLIVER *peers at her, tries to see.*

LUCY *takes off the spectacles and hands them to him.*

OLIVER *puts them on.*

OLIVER Ah.

LUCY I can get you some books if you pay me. I mean, you'd have to pay me. There's no point in anything else.

OLIVER I already "pay" you. Damn and God. Haven't you squeezed enough out of me? And where the hell have you been, anyway? My dressing needs to be changed, you silly cow, can't you see?

He throws the can of milk to the floor. A weak throw.

Supposed to come every week. Can't you see my bloody legs?

He struggles his dressing gown off, lets it fall to the floor.

He hitches up his nightshirt.

Now it's lighter we see OLIVER's legs properly. His bandages are ancient, dark liquid seeping through. They're swollen with infection.

Horrific.

LUCY Look. I'm not—

Fuck.
Shit.

Fuck.
You know what?
They really smell.

OLIVER The last carer, she. She. Put the bandages on the wrong way. They haven't been right since. I tried to tell her, bloody bitch just makes that noise with her teeth. Just shouts at me. Oh, I don't *mind* she's Nigerian, I'm not putting her down but she's a malingering bitch.

Oh, it doesn't matter, I can do it myself. I can do it all on my own I don't need her interfering she doesn't know what she's doing.

I just need bandages.

He stares at LUCY.

I don't know when they're sending another carer.

Do you know when they're sending another carer?

LUCY *shakes her head.*

OLIVER Yesterday was a good day. I had one of those surprising craps. Out it came. Rainy. God knows why, there's no roughage in it. I haven't had any cabbage for—

He tries to remember. Gives up.

Half of it stuck to my arse.

Beat.

I am worried about my legs.

This place is dying, you see. They forget about us. Who's going to care if an old—

Why should they?

But you see, the pain. The pain is becoming—

Pause.

LUCY, *slowly, goes to the condensed milk tin and picks it up.*

She gives it back to OLIVER.

OLIVER *stares at it, in his hands.*

OLIVER It's nice to talk to you.
 (softly) You are kind.

LUCY I'm not kind.

OLIVER You seem kind.

LUCY I came here to rob you.

Beat.

OLIVER You've come to the right place, young lady.

LUCY Well, not "rob" exactly. More to see if there was anything left. I mean, I didn't know you'd be here.
 I mean, or anyone.
 So, it's not robbing.
 Technically.

OLIVER A "looter".

LUCY Yeah.

Beat.

S'pose.

OLIVER Find anything?

LUCY Loads.

OLIVER Good nicker?

Beat.

LUCY Yeah.

OLIVER Like what?

LUCY (*shrugs*) Stuff.

Beat.

OLIVER I'll show you something—

Throughout the following exchange OLIVER hobbles to the bed, eases something, with difficulty, from under the mattress.

As he turns, we see it is an old jiffy bag.

OLIVER I can't believe people really leave anything—

LUCY They do. You wouldn't believe—

OLIVER I don't believe.

LUCY I found a snowman. One of those inflatable ones. You know those? Some of them shout at you when you walk by? And light up and wobble?

OLIVER *completely blank.*

LUCY Jezzy people have them. Mostly outside, so not here because there's no outside. I didn't expect to see one here, not in someone's room.

This friend of mine had a nail gun when I was a kid. I think she nicked it off her old man. We used to go round zapping those stupid things. They are so *stupid*. I mean, if you're a jezzzer and you're cheap and nasty why would you want everyone to know?

OLIVER *stares. He shakes his head.*

LUCY It's like, why shout about it? They totally, totally deserve someone to shoot them so they deflate. They're usually half deflated anyway.

Beat.

I didn't zap this one.

I could have. There were nails on the floor, actually, so I could have punctured it, but I didn't. Next to it was a toy, a sort of shitty version of a Mr Potato Head. Cheaper. But still.

Pause.

This place is shite.

OLIVER Of course it is. It's a sewer.

LUCY I hope they burn it to the ground. I hope they put a bomb under it. They should stuff it right into a black hole so it goes so small it explodes everywhere outwards.

Beat.

OLIVER Wouldn't that infect the universe?

LUCY That's funny. I like that.

She doesn't laugh.

There's lot of stuff left.

OLIVER You've seen every flat?

LUCY It's all shit, none of it's worth anything.

OLIVER You should be careful. I hope you don't come here at night.

LUCY Where do you think they put all the other people?

Beat.

Do you think they'll give them new things?

OLIVER It's getting worse at night. Bloody cars. How can they afford cars?

LUCY Where do you think they've gone?

OLIVER Sometimes I'm so afraid it makes me cry. I burn with shame. I used to be brave. I used to be worse—
(*softly*) You've no idea.

Beat.

Bloody black bastards.

LUCY How d'you know they're black?

OLIVER I can hear them. Innit innit innit innit that bloody talk—

LUCY Everyone says that.

OLIVER I *hear* them—

LUCY Maybe you'll get done by a white man.

OLIVER He'll sound like a black man.
And they aren't "men". I'm not frightened of "men".

LUCY Nor am I.

OLIVER Well. You should be.

Beat.

OLIVER *holds up the jiffy bag. As he's about to speak—*

LUCY In number eighty nine there's a really massive plant. Massive leaves like it should be in a forest.
Like it should be—
Anyway.

I did try to move it but then again I thought, will anyone ever want to buy a tree? And it was too heavy anyway.

I weed in it.

It was so big I could squat in the pot and I thought I'll go back later and see if I killed it.

Do you think I killed it?

OLIVER I don't know.

Beat.

LUCY You don't buy trees. Nobody "buys" trees.

OLIVER Who are you?

LUCY *stares.*

OLIVER Who are you? What were you going to steal? From here. You're just a little thief.

LUCY Looting isn't thieving. Fuck you it isn't. And I'm not.

OLIVER A little tramp—

LUCY You're a fucking old bastard.

OLIVER (*shouting*) Nobody swears in my flat.

LUCY You did.

OLIVER No I didn't—

LUCY Just now you—

OLIVER It's my flat I'm allowed to—

OLIVER *hurls the tin of condensed milk to the floor.*

He winces as pain shoots through his legs.

LUCY It's not yours. It's the Council's. And your carer isn't coming back. And you'll have to leave and everyone knows—

Beat.

LUCY *turns to leave.*

OLIVER Wait. Wait. Wait. Wait. Wait.

LUCY *stops.*

OLIVER Wait wait wait.

LUCY *turns.*

OLIVER Wait. Wait. Please.

Please.
Please.

I don't have any food.

Just. To talk.

Just.

Just.

I have money. I can show you money.

If I tell you my name. Please. Then we're alright. Then it's alright.
You're not a criminal or a scab. We're friends.

LUCY *is uncomfortable.*

OLIVER *holds out his hand.*

OLIVER Oliver.

LUCY Don't tell me.

OLIVER *keeps his hand held out. An effort.*

Silence.

OLIVER *drops his hand.*

LUCY We're saving up for a ticket. Me and Darren.

OLIVER Oh, that's nice. You're very lucky.

Silence.

Who's Darren?

LUCY He's back. They didn't keep him long. I haven't said I loved him yet, but I will. It might help—

He has dirt in his eyes and his hands shake. He thinks I don't see.

Beat.

OLIVER Where are you going?

LUCY Eh?

OLIVER The ticket.

LUCY *(carefully)* That. Is a secret.

OLIVER *stares at her.*

LUCY I can tell you it's for a train. It's a train ticket, not a bus. I guess it's
ok to tell you that. I haven't been on a bus since—

Last time I was on a bus there was a lot of grease and slime on the
window, on the inside, yeah? It was a hot day and someone's head
had been against the glass, asleep or dead maybe, and all the glob
in their hair had smeared.

Bleck.

Beat.

It's not just any ticket. It's far.
It's a long way. There'll be—

She searches.

Colour. Sort of.

Beat.

As OLIVER starts to speak—

LUCY Because the light's different.

OLIVER *silenced.*

LUCY Darren said.

Pause.

OLIVER Have a look at this. Be careful with it, I don't show it to many
people.

OLIVER *takes a single sheet of paper out of the jiffy bag.*

It is a letter. A heading at the top.

OLIVER My contract. The buggers owe me. Six million, you understand.

He nods.

He holds the letter out to LUCY.

Slowly, LUCY takes it.

She looks at it.

OLIVER *watches her sharply.*

OLIVER. It's coming. Soon. Won't be long now. I've waited years. The stress of it wrecked my heart. It's why I'm old.

I had a letter. Somewhere.

Confused, he looks around.

I've been in touch with the Secretary of State, he assures me he's looking into it. I should have it next week. You know, all those governments over there, they—

Conspiratorial, he rubs his fingers together. He means "money".

Things work very differently in Africa.

LUCY *stares at the letter for a long while.*

She hands it back to him

She stares at the floor.

OLIVER I shan't need any books next month. I'll be long gone.

Silence.

LUCY I should go.

OLIVER You could help me draft another letter. I'd give you some money for that.

Beat.

LUCY Now?

OLIVER A share.
(*nods*) Of it.

LUCY *unconvinced.*

OLIVER (*slyly*) And maybe a little something now?

LUCY Yeah?

OLIVER I have the carer's money.

LUCY Show it me.

 OLIVER *doesn't move.*

 LUCY *starts to leave.*

OLIVER It's in the toilet.

 LUCY *turns.*

LUCY You must think I'm fucking stupid.

OLIVER I'm an old man. Frightened of thieves I'm not going to put it in a drawer am I?

 LUCY *considers this.*

OLIVER Trouble is the bulb isn't working. Went a long time ago. I can't get to it. The plastic thing came off. It doesn't fit. It must have fitted at some point but it doesn't seem to now.

Beat.

 LUCY *looks to the door.*

She might leave.

OLIVER You can leave it open a crack. It's alright. I'll stay here. I just can't see.
 You can see.
 You're young.

Beat.

 LUCY *exits.*

She returns a few moments later. Shaken.

LUCY Don't you have a flush?

OLIVER *snorts. Not exactly a laugh.*

LUCY How can you—

OLIVER *mimes the action of a broken flush.*

OLIVER
Sssshhht.
Sssshhht.
Sssshhht.
Sssshhht.

He escalates into fury.

SSSSHHHHT—
SSSSHHHHT—
SSSSHHHHT—

The action hurts him.

He staggers in pain.

He drops to his knees.

He screams.

Desperate, he holds a hand out.

LUCY *is forced to take it.*

OLIVER *screams again as he pulls himself up.*

LUCY Oh my God. Shit. I don't—
What do I do?

OLIVER *clings to her hand.*

He indicates the bed.

LUCY *guides him to the bed.*

OLIVER *sits.*

He sobs with relief.

LUCY Didn't see any money.

OLIVER It's there.

LUCY Didn't see anything.

OLIVER Behind the
 Behind the

Silence.

He sighs into his pain.

LUCY I'm not being funny. I think you might—

 They don't look too good.

OLIVER I need to change the dressing.

LUCY I think you should leave it on. I don't think you should move.

OLIVER Help me.

LUCY I can't help you. I shouldn't even be here, right. I'm sorry.
 I don't think you should do anything.

OLIVER I'm out of dressing. This wouldn't even have happened on the
 field. Damn and God even out there we had dressing. Maybe you
 can help me tear a sheet.

LUCY I'm not looking at your legs.

 I can't look at your legs.

 OLIVER *begins to unwind the dressing. He peels it slowly.*

LUCY Don't—

 LUCY *stares, horrified, compelled to look.*

The liquid through the bandage is ominously dark.

The bandage is stuck.

 OLIVER *tugs at it.*

LUCY Please leave it on I think you should leave it on.

OLIVER *(in pain)* It's alright.

LUCY It's not alright. It shouldn't smell.

OLIVER *cries.*

LUCY It's rotten and it smells. Is there any way—
Maybe you can get to a hospital?

OLIVER *stops.*

He lets go of the bandage.

Slowly, he looks up, he looks at LUCY.

OLIVER When I lost Shirley I didn't know where else to go. I wanted to go
as far as possible. She was a silly cow. But still I wanted to hurt
something and get away with it.

It was a long time ago.

He nods, remembering.

It was warm.

Everyone sweating. Shiny. Damn filthy mozzers.

Oh, I knew there would be blood. I knew that. But I didn't expect
(he searches for the word)

Colour.

So much colour. I didn't expect the grass to grow back.

Yellow and green. I hear laughter through the trees even though
they've gone. They're long gone. I once saw a woman with a hand
cut off, and someone putting—

He finds his way back to the present.

Extraordinary.

*He places his "contract" back in the jiffy bag, carefully, as he
speaks. He returns it to the place under the mattress.*

Things became indistinct for a while, and everything else was just
noise. But it comes back, of course it does. Somehow these images
stay with you.

These kids. They should cover them in fat and let the dogs at them.

He smiles sadly.

Too much time to think.

He's confused, suddenly.

I'm no trouble, am I?

I'm never any trouble?

I just.

I'm a little worried about my legs.

Pause.

You're a kind girl and I hope you come back and see me again.
Before you go.

Will you go back to your—
Tree?

Pause.

LUCY I don't think I will go back there.

LUCY *leaves.*