

RONA MUNRO

YOUR TURN TO CLEAN THE STAIR

&

FUGUE

MASARYKOVA UNIVERZITA
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MRS MACKIE. They're waiting down there?

LISA. I'll come with you.

MRS MACKIE. But there's still all this on the stair, someone'll need to clean it, tell them that needs done, look at the mess on it now.

LISA. Alright I'll do it. You go down. I'll clean the stair.

LISA moves to start mopping.

I'll take care of it Mrs Mackie. Do you want to wait for me?

MRS MACKIE. Oh I canny keep them waiting. Do you want any messages while I'm out?

LISA. No. We're alright thanks.

MRS MACKIE moves to exit, looks back at LISA cleaning the stair.

MRS MACKIE. It's no your turn.

LISA. So who's counting?

FUGUE

To Edward

Characters

KAY ONE: A secretary. About 24, frightened and depressed.

KAY TWO: KAY ONE'S memory.

GHOST. Something that wears the shape of a woman about 24-25.

PSYCHIATRIST. Played by the same actress as the GHOST. About 24-25. Self-confident and successful.

Setting

Act One takes place in an isolated cottage near the Ladder Hills, Grampian. There is a bed, bedside lamp, mirror. A few of Kay's belongings are strewn about, half unpacked. Act Two takes place in a hospital ward a few days later. Hospital bed, medical charts, etc.

Fugue was first performed at the Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh, on Thursday, 28 April, 1983, with the following cast:

KAY ONE

Gaylie Runciman

KAY TWO

Kath Rogers

GHOST and PSYCHIATRIST

Evelyn Langland

Directed by Les Waters

Designed by Helen Turner

Lighting design by George Tarduck

ACT ONE

Scene One

Dark. A GIRL'S VOICE is singing, far away:

Queen Mary, Queen Mary my age is sixteen
My father's a farmer on yonder green.

He's plenty o' money tae dress me sae braw
But there's nae bonny laddie will tak me awa.

KAY 2 is standing in a spotlight.

There is the sound of an electric typewriter, faint at first then growing to almost deafening volume; as it dies away other sounds surge in waves.

MAN'S VOICE. Kay? Take some dictation will you? Dear sir with reference to your letter of the sixteenth . . . sixteenth . . . sixteenth . . .

GIRL. Kay's away on her holidays, (Giggle.) Kay's away on her holidays, (Giggle.) Kay's away . . .

A radio playing music drowns the voices and is in turn replaced by the sound of a train growing louder and louder. Suddenly it stops.

KAY 2 gasps and shudders as though emerging from deep water. There is a brief silence. Then in the darkness there is the distinct sound of someone running their finger along the edge of a pack of cards. KAY 2 peers in the direction of the noise.

Light grows to reveal GHOST sprawled in a chair. She is staring at KAY 2.

KAY 2 walks up to her. The GHOST stops and turns away from her to stare from. She shuffles the cards. The light fades.

KAY 1 walks into the spotlight. She is wearing a grimy battered dressing gown. Her feet are bare and bandaged. She looks haggard and starved.

KAY 1. Everyone wants explanations. (*Shrugs.*) Well I'm not mad, that's the first thing, I'm not mad. I don't see why people can't think of it as a natural phenomenon, what happened. Like a tidal wave or an earthquake . . . if they'd found me in this state after an earthquake no-one would be pestering me to know why would they? . . . I think it's easier to think of me as unstable . . . more comfortable all round . . . maybe I am at that. (*Lights up cigarette.*)

Look, it all happened in my head. How am I supposed to explain that? How am I supposed to start describing that? It was real. It wasn't a delusion, a figment of my hysterical imagination. It was real . . . but . . . only in here. (*Taps her head.*) Do you see? Great. (*To herself.*) That sounds stable doesn't it? (*Bitterly.*)

All that stuff about hauntings, that was the papers. I suppose I was talking a bit wildly at first, they must have got it from that. That place isn't haunted. It's beautiful. It's quite . . . innocent.

I went there to be alone, I admit that. Everyone seems to think there's something unhealthy about wanting a bit of solitude. I was fed up, no, not manically depressed, nothing like that just . . . I've got a really boring job you know . . . I just wanted a change. Sometimes I like being by myself, to think things out. Everyone does that. And this place . . . it's special. It's like . . . part of my childhood I suppose. We went there every summer till I was sixteen. I hadn't been back since.

I'd go there again you know. I would. Even after what . . . (*Stops herself.*) It's a beautiful place. It was my special place.

An alarm clock goes off. Sudden sunlight reveals KAY 2 in bed, buried in the sheets beyond the reach of the noise. Her hand comes out and hits the clock. After a few moments she sticks her head out and squints at it.

KAY 2 (*wonderingly*). Half past nine.

KAY 1. They were all knee deep in dictation already. I could lie there till ten o'clock if I wanted to. Midday even.

KAY 2. Don't want to. (*Shambles out of bed.*)

KAY 1. All that free time. I could lie there and doze it all away if I chose.

KAY 2. No I don't. (*Shuffles for bathroom.*) Long lies huh?

KAY 1. Two startings on the sill, wings glazed with light. The stones sparkled with a late frost.

KAY 2 (*running water*). Char-ist! (*Wails.*) It's cold!

KAY 1. Outside, wet bald hills and fields, old grass, yellow green. Watery ground and watery light . . . familiar ground . . .

KAY 2 (*singing off*). All things bright and beautiful all creatures great and . . . Towell! What have you done with the towel Kay Douglas? (*Staggers back in with eyes screwed shut, wipes face on bedclothes.*) Must unpack sometime. (*Starts making bed.*)

KAY 1. I felt great. First day of the holidays. Like school holidays again. I felt free. I hadn't even unpacked yet. I could suit myself.

KAY 2 (*imitating employer*). 'I do think you should apply yourself more Miss Douglas.' (*Sticks out tongue.*) Bleh.

KAY 1. My job you see . . . well they like to keep you busy. If there's no real work to do they make you dust shelves or something. Clean shelves. That sort of thing annoys me.

KAY 2. 'It's time you realised nine tenths of all work constitutes a form of drudgery Miss Douglas.' Bleh and more bleh.

KAY 1. I mean it's my life, but I've sold them eight hours a day. They have to use them somehow . . . They didn't even want me to take a holiday. 'March is our busiest month Miss Douglas, we can ill spare your services, erratic though they may be.'

KAY 2. You owe me you old mole. Five working days bought and paid for and carried over from last year . . . (*Singing extravagantly.*) All things bright and beautiful . . . Oooooh . . . (*Lies back on bed.*) I'm not going to unpack. Ever.

KAY 1. That was the first thing they latched on to. Why did you go off on your own? Were you upset about something? (*Walks over to look down at KAY 1.*) I wasn't upset. I was

glad to be there. I mean I'd been upset. Things had been really getting to me. Well . . . my job mainly . . .

KAY 2. Never going back. Never, never, NEVER! (*Laughs.*) Well, not for seven days.

KAY 1. It's always the same.

They speak rapidly, independently. Occasionally their lines overlap.

KAY 2 (*chanting*). Read letters, type letters . . .

KAY 1. Make coffee.

KAY 2. File letters, tear up letters . . .

KAY 1. Make coffee.

KAY 2. Redirect letters, decipher illegible letters . . . take a phone call and another and another . . .

KAY 1 . . . and make coffee and make coffee and more coffee

. . .

KAY 2. Well no more!

KAY 1. Not for a week. (*Pause.*) It's always the same. Another eight hours. Another pebble on the beach . . .

unchanging . . . undramatic . . .

KAY 2 (*bouncing to her feet again looking through possessions, sings*). When you're smiling, when you're smiling . . . Shoes, that's what I need. (*Searches for shoes.*)

KAY 1. The franking machine was the worst. I hated it. I was buried in a basement all alone with it like some kind of obscene arranged marriage - me, fresh young and nubile tied forever to this overweight, farting geriatric who ate paper.

KAY 2 (*singing, putting on shoes*). When you're laughing, when you're laughing . . .

KAY 1. It wasn't the job. It was me. I loathed it . . . but in a quiet sort of way. A numb lazy sort of way . . . that's what gnawed at me. I still trotted in there and sat in that chair and typed and stared out the window . . .

KAY 2 (*raucous*). When you're smiling, when you're smi-et-ing, the whole world smiles with . . . COMB!

Where's my bloody comb! (*Peers under things.*) Cooee, comb, where are you?

KAY 1. Sometimes I think my life has just been a succession of windows. School, college, other jobs . . . Grubby windows with broken Venetian blinds and the drone of French verbs being conjugated over and over. The fan glass of what was once a Georgian mansion, looking out at a green statue of Prince Albert now covered in bird shit, my fingers type dancing the time away . . . my last job, a tiny skylight . . . clouds and cats and pigeons staring down at this pale preserved exhibit who stared back with the strip light making her face a blank . . . Working under that strip light all day gives you a headache.

KAY 2 (*now tugging at her hair in front of mirror*). I feel pretty, oh so pretty, I feel pretty and witty and . . . yeuch! (*Examines pluck*)

KAY 1. I don't see why what I thought about my work was important. O.K. I was a bit bored. Who isn't? Why does everyone keep going on about it?

The light comes up slightly on the GHOST. She is humming 'Queen Mary' softly.

KAY 2 (*finishing at mirror*). Don't worry Kay dear, no-one's going to see you, not a soul. (*Freezes*)

KAY 1. It's not important all that. People keep trying to get me talking about it . . . I suppose it seems tidy, I was bored so I had a nervous breakdown. I just thought it would help pass the time doctor . . . Christ . . . Look. (*Walks up to KAY 2.*) I felt fantastic.

KAY 2 (*still staring blankly forward*). Not a soul.

KAY 1 turns to look at GHOST. GHOST stops humming.

KAY 1 (*insistently*). I wanted a bit of peace and quiet. I did. I've always liked my own company . . . (*GHOST disappears again.*)

It's not that I don't have friends or anything.

I could have gone skiing that month. My mate Sheila had asked me . . .

All my close friends, old friends had sort of . . . gone . . .

like I'd sat still and watched them all dash past and vanish over the horizon . . . running for other jobs, other towns, other friends . . . going abroad . . .

KAY 2. Saudi Arabia.

KAY 1. I felt like I'd been left out . . . Left behind . . .

Sometimes I get this strange feeling, just the first seconds before I get out of bed . . . Like a hunger, but every bit of me, every cell of me's hungry—my mouth to be filled, my eyes to cry or laugh, all my skin itches to be touched, to move, to stretch . . . and nothing will ever be *enough*.

KAY 2 (*interrupting suddenly and decisively*). Breakfast. (*She starts eating.*)

KAY 1. I suppose what I'm really trying to say is I don't think I had any kind of breakdown. I'd no reason. I'm not like that. Well look at me! (*Points to KAY 2*) Do I look manically depressed?

Oh I don't know.

There's been a lot of speculation about what I 'saw' . . . I don't see why I have to talk about it, still . . . It seems an idea that appeals to everyone, poor defenceless young girl in lonely cottage preyed on by something 'wild and woolly from the woods' and I quote believe it or not.

I love those woods.

KAY 2 (*is pulling on a coca still chewing*).

I mean, I did see . . . something. It . . . it was that first day . . . I went out.

KAY 2. Out.

KAY 1. Drenched four warm limbs in cold air. A small wood. It was my forest . . . dead leaves, black, damp, halfway to earth, smell like spice . . .

KAY 2. This is where I was an outlaw . . . this is where I was an Indian with a twisted bow . . . this is where I was a tiger . . .

KAY 1. A pine branch, a spray of sharp water in my face. The old paths are still here. Eight years. It's a different generation of rabbits keeping them clear. I'm too broad to get down them untangled, I don't quite fit . . .

KAY 2 (*noticing it*). The cave.

KAY 1. Not a real cave, a hollow under ancient roots of broom, big enough to crouch in . . . stuff myself with hoarded food, write curses in fake blood for posterity . . .

KAY 2 (*bending to touch them*). Rusted cans . . .

KAY 1 . . . and make plans . . .

KAY 2. I'm going to be a nurse, a rock star, a rally driver . . .

KAY 1. Even that last year, hours of staring at the leaves, dreaming my future away . . .

KAY 2. Take my exams and travel the world . . .

KAY 1. Oh yes, that wood was haunted, by me, at nine and six and twelve and sixteen . . . We'd come here every year, I knew every inch.

KAY 2. Funny being back.

KAY 1. I don't quite . . . fit.

Light comes up slowly on GHOST again.

And it had its share of the wild and woolly. A schoolfriend used to feed me horror stories. All my nightmares were peopled with cheap sensational images: Victorian bread and butter writers reaching out of paupers' graves to stroke my spine with shabby tales of demons and strangulation.

KAY 2 (*pulling a face*). Wooooo! (*Giggles*.)

KAY 1. There's one path in the wood, a tunnel through overhanging branches . . .

KAY 2. Don't look back.

KAY 1. If you looked back . . . it got you.

KAY 2 (*giggling again*). It.

KAY 1. Don't ask me what 'it' was . . . just . . .

KAY 2. Something horrible. (*Fake fiendish cackle*.)

KAY 1. No. If I'd looked back and seen an empty path . . . nothing at all . . . that would have been the worst . . . Nothing there at all.

The GHOST snaps a twig in her hands. KAY 2 spins to stare at her.

KAY 2. Hell's teeth. (*Catches her breath.*) Don't be silly. Don't be silly. There's nothing there.

KAY 1. Eight years and I still jumped. They call it an overactive imagination. Well it was all the same... I ran and jumped and rolled in it all. My wood. Got it down my neck and in my shoes and under my finger nails...

KAY 2 (*pulls a face*). Damp.

KAY 1. It was good. I climbed my mountain. A small grassy hill. I'd be alone on top of it and stare down and think of nothing at all, just look...

KAY 2. Right foot, left foot, (*Pants.*) come on Kay, without a break, climb it in one, right foot, left foot... Now... (*Looks round her breathing quickly.*)

KAY 1. A long stretch of ground. Bog and moor. A blanket of greens and browns and bright streamers of water. My little kingdom. Not another living soul for miles...

KAY 2. Who's *that*?

KAY 1. They were walking, a small dark figure far below me on the wide flat ground. Walking, but never getting any closer... only the legs treading the ground, as if the earth was moving under their feet and they were treading against it...

KAY 2. Who?

KAY 1. An anonymous doll-like figure pacing... nowhere.

Light fades on GHOST.

Then it... (*Hastily.*) it must have got beyond a rise in the ground. They must have walked out of sight... It vanished. I thought...

KAY 2. Maybe they were walking into the wind...

KAY 1. There was a light breeze high on the hill where I stood. It lifted grey stuff, all some fox or hawk had left of a rabbit, and baited it gently to and fro among the grass stems...

KAY 2 *stands staring at where the GHOST was.*

That's it, that's all. Finish.

I'm telling you, that's all I saw, all of it. The rest was just dreams. Just in my head.

(*Smiles.*) Nobody wants to hear that. They all want something more. O.K... I have seen other things... At the age of five...

KAY 2. A little old lady.

KAY 1... standing in the cloakroom of my kindergarten school. Just standing there beneath the pegs and rows of little green coats...

KAY 2... the smell of used gym shoes...

KAY 1. You don't smell dreams. They hung her portrait on the wall months later... Founder's portrait...

KAY 2. Dead one hundred years exactly.

KAY 1. So maybe I had seen it somewhere else.

KAY 2. This is different. This feels...

KAY 1. 'Ms. Douglas, is it or is it not a fact that on the thirtieth of July 1976, you being at the time some seventeen years of age, you saw a further apparition while employed as a castle guide in a genuine medieval castle? To what do you attribute this apparition?'

KAY 2 (*reflectively*). Sex.

KAY 1. 'Sex?'

KAY 2. Makes sense. I mean it was all starting to happen at that age wasn't it? I was quite... keyed up about everything...

KAY 1. 'You attributed this image of a person dead some two hundred years to the vibrations of an overactive libido?'

KAY 2. Well... (*Weights the idea up.*)... His portrait was quite attractive... I suppose I could have made the whole thing up...

KAY 1. 'Created the vision yourself in a frenzy of sexual fervour? Were you in a frenzy of sexual fervour?'

KAY 2. I was doing the cleaning. Hmmm. (*Shakes her head.*)

KAY 1. There's been other things like that. Little things. So

that figure walking . . . I'd seen other things like that. I never told anyone. Oh it's just nerves. I'm highly strung. Fatigue. Over caffeineation . . . What used to worry me is that it might show. That it was written in neon across my forehead. 'I think I have had psychic experiences. Classified Locomie.' Tell anyone and they start watching you sideways waiting for you to hang from the Venetian blind saying you're a pickled onion. The thing is . . . what happened . . . the dreams whatever . . . it wasn't like that . . .

KAY 2. I felt it. (She takes coat off and goes to sit in chair. Light fades.)

KAY 1. Do I have to talk about this? I don't think it will make me feel better. I think I'll remember. I don't want to remember . . . All right! All right! (Rapidly.) That day, I was caught in the rain. No shelter. Every twig and leaf was sodden. I got damper layer by layer. Glorious discomfort. A hot bath, a warm fire and I dozed in front of it. Sleeping where I sat. (Agitated.) That's reason enough for waking at two a.m., the fire dead, every muscle cramped. That's how you get nightmares isn't it? The body's trying to scare you into waking up and making it comfortable.

Yeah?

Everyone has nightmares.

But this was . . . Oh Jesus . . .

KAY 2 (sitting). Jesus . . .

KAY 1. It was cold.

KAY 2 (shudders and sucks in her breath). . . . Cold.

KAY 1. Dark and black and cold and something . . . something.

The GHOST walks slowly out of the shadows to stand behind KAY 2. She ruffles cards in KAY 2's ear.

KAY 2 turns and finds her face level with the GHOST's. The GHOST smiles a slow joyless smile that stays on her face for a few seconds then vanishes abruptly.

GHOST (dead). Kay. (She looks round her slowly with exaggerated head movements like an animal sizing up a new environment. She makes the name a sound rather than a

word.) Kay. Kay. (Her eye settles on KAY 2 again and she freezes looking at her sideways. Slowly she turns her head till it is level with KAY 2's, nose to nose. Her tongue touches her lip once.)

Hungry.

After a second she smiles the same joyless smile, she touches KAY 2's hair lightly.

KAY 1. I felt it. I felt it.

GHOST (coaxingly). Hungry. (Turns and walks slowly away from KAY 2 into the darkness.)

KAY 2 remains unmoving. Alarm and daylight arrive suddenly and simultaneously. She sits still for a moment then stiffly gets up to stop alarm as it peters into silence.

KAY 2. I suppose . . . ?

KAY 1. I suppose I slept.

KAY 2. I must have slept. (Sits down on bed.)

KAY 1. It was a grey day. Low cloud a lid on the horizon, hanging, waiting to drop and suffocate the ground in mist. A damp, dull grey day. And I didn't bother to put fresh clothes on. So. That was the dream. One of the dreams. Not very healthy I suppose. So I had tangible ones. (Shrugs.)

I was upset, depressed, whatever. A bit. It didn't work, coming back. I thought I'd like it, nostalgia for all the good times I had. It didn't help . . . remembering didn't help . . .

KAY 2 (quiet). I'm going to be a rock star, a rally driver . . .

KAY 1. Type letters, file letters, make coffee . . .

KAY 2. Take my exams and travel the world . . .

KAY 1. The seconds of my life ticking away. They're precious those moments, precious as blood . . .

KAY 2. Something wild, something special . . .

KAY 1. I'm not very special.

Maybe my nightmares are unique. Well . . . I better cultivate them then.

Don't you think? (*Shakes her head.*)

No. I tried to work it out sitting there. I was scared.

KAY 2. I felt it.

KAY 1. It's not my job, it's me. It's all of it. It's my life. Idling down the plughole, second by second . . .

KAY 2. I could get run over by a bus tomorrow. (*Smiles.*)

KAY 1. What would it change? I had a row . . . discussion with Sheila about it.

KAY 2 (*bitterly*). Sheila.

KAY 1 (*imitation of Sheila*). 'Your trouble is you worry too much.'

KAY 2. No but listen, I mean it! If I did who'd notice? What difference would it make? There I'd be wandering along, thinking I about what I was going to have for tea, or what I wanted to do at the weekend, or how I was going to be world famous one day, and then 'splat!' I'd be a smear on the tarmac and a few fantasies vanishing into the ether. Don't you see?

KAY 1. She didn't.

KAY 2. It makes everything pointless. Everything. We're wasting time.

KAY 1. Do I believe that? (*Frowns, considering it.*) Sometimes I enjoy playing lonely and misunderstood you know?

KAY 2. This is different. This is real. (*Light fades on KAY 2 in bed.*)

KAY 1. Oh no. Don't drag all this up. Don't. I don't want to think about it. Don't! (*The GHOST walks over to the bed. She hums 'Queen Mary'.*)

KAY 2 (*wakes up*). Jesus . . . ? (*Stares at GHOST*)

GHOST (*gentle*). Kay.

KAY 2. What are you? What's going on?

GHOST. Kay.

KAY 2. I'm dreaming. It's a dream.

GHOST. Hungry. I'm hungry. (*Smiles, moves slowly to sit on bed.*)

KAY 2. I'm dreaming that's all. All right Kay. All right . . . just switch on the light, that's it, reach out and switch it on . . . (*Eyes on GHOST she reaches blindly for light switch.*) Come on.

The GHOST puts her hand over the light switch. KAY 2 stares down at it for a second then reaches out and touches it. The GHOST grabs her hand. KAY 2 makes a small terrified noise. Blackout.

KAY 1. Don't.

Lights up on scene as before. GHOST humming.

KAY 1. No!

KAY 2. What?

GHOST. Hungry.

KAY 2. Who are you?

GHOST. Kay.

KAY 1. No!

GHOST. Kay.

KAY 2 reaches for the light switch again. GHOST stops her as before, moving more rapidly this time. Blackout.

KAY 1. Don't!

Lights up. GHOST sitting on bed. KAY 2 reaching for the light switch.

KAY 2. No.

KAY 1. No!

KAY 2. Oh please don't.

KAY 1. DON'T!

The GHOST grabs KAY 2. KAY 1 screams. GHOST and KAY 2 freeze staring at each other. GHOST gets up slowly and walks over to behind KAY 1 who is standing face buried in her hands. GHOST pauses for a second then moves off slowly. KAY 1 raises her head. KAY 2 is still frozen.

KAY 1 (*whispers*). Every night. (*Walks to look at KAY 2.*) Every night. WHY?

KAY 2. What's wrong with me?

KAY 1. Something out of the dark. Tracking me. Scenting me. Hunting me. Coming right through my head. Something was smashing holes in there and struggling up into my dreams. Getting closer. The dreams were first like a warning breath on my neck.

Daylight grows on KAY 2 again.

You should have got up then, You should have just got up with the daylight and run off. Get out!

KAY 2. What's wrong with me?

KAY 1. Oh Kay.

Pause.

KAY 2. (*sits up*). I'm just a bit overtired that's all.

KAY 1 (*Bitterly*). Oh yes. That's right.

KAY 2. I've been letting things get on top of me.

KAY 1. Shovelling them on to your head with an earth mover.

KAY 2. It doesn't matter. I'll go home. Tomorrow. I'll go home. (*Sobs*). What for? What'll I do there?

KAY 1. Anything, you can do *anything*.

KAY 2. I won't be back, what difference does it make?

KAY 1. Jesus! You! YOU! A nervous breakdown? (*To audience.*) You think she had a nervous breakdown? Her? She'd have loved it. Revelled in it. Conclusive proof that she was something special. Highly strung. Unusually unstable. Different. But she's not. (*Yells at KAY 2.*) You're not! What were you doing shutting yourself away in that cottage, brooding your time away? What were you trying to prove? Look what you did to me because you were *bored*. Just because life wasn't spoiling you the way I thought it would. Didn't you realise what was happening?

I see things. And I knew I did. I knew what was happening to me, inside, deep down, I knew. I stayed out of pride. Stupid pride. I was proud I could terrify myself with visions. I wanted to hover on the brink of sanity. Because it was something wild, something special.

Because it was happening to me.

You stupid cow Kay Douglas!

White noise starts in the background, quiet at first then growing louder.

KAY 1. Oh no.

(The noise grows, over KAY 2's voice heard speaking childishly.) I'm going to be a rock star, a rally driver, an Indian, a tiger . . .

KAY 1. I don't want to think about it!

(KAY 2's voice is now repeating.) What difference does it make? What difference does it make?

KAY 2 gets to her feet. KAY 1 moves away from the bed, paning, her hands on her face. KAY 2 follows, moving identically.

The noise is now the GHOST repeating 'Hungry, hungry, hungry . . .'

The GHOST walks into KAY 2's path. Both KAY's look up.

KAY 2 stares horrified at GHOST, KAY 1 at empty air.

The GHOST takes KAY 2's hand, KAY 1 raises hers as if it too is being held. GHOST suddenly pulls on KAY 2's arm and grabs her. Noise stops.

KAY 1. Kay no! (*Whirls to look at GHOST and KAY 2.*)

GHOST smiles at her.

Blackout.

Scene Two

KAY 1 and KAY 2 are standing side by side. The GHOST is in the background as before.

KAY 1. When I was two, I still had a cot. My father dropped me in it, me in my stretch nylon pyjamas with little yellow animals all over them, and talked me to sleep, with stories about rabbits.

KAY 2. When I was two I was given a large cuddly rabbit of my own.

KAY 1. I ate it. Right down to the little plastic rose.

KAY 2. When I was two we went to the cottage for the first time. I saw real rabbits for the first time.

KAY 1. They weren't at all what I expected.

KAY 2. There was a jasmine tree at the back door then. I thought it was magic, flowering when everything was still waking up.

KAY 1. I used to crawl out of bed and sit under it and stare at the moon.

KAY 2. There was a hedgehog used to sit there too. Eating slugs.

KAY 1. My brother found a huge packing case in the shed at the cottage . . .

KAY 2 . . . when I was five . . .

KAY 1. He sat in it for days. We had to carry his meals out to him.

KAY 2. He said he was going to fly to the moon in it.

KAY 1. I remember feeling slightly surprised when he never took off.

KAY 2. He sat me on his bed and solemnly showed me a great scribble of biro scratches. A wobbly chaos. 'What is it?'

KAY 1. It.

KAY 2. But what is it?'

KAY 1. Nothing.

KAY 2. But what is it?'

KAY 1. It's *nothing*. That's what nothing looks like. And if it gets you . . .

KAY 2. Yes?'

KAY 1. You're nothing.

KAY 2. It's lived in attics till I was eight or nine.

KAY 1. It lived in my nightmares longer.

KAY 2. The first tree I ever climbed was the lilac tree at the back of the cottage.

KAY 1. It's a bush.

KAY 2. It was a tree then. Its heart was rotten but strong enough to bear my four-year-old weight.

KAY 1. The next was a broom tree.

KAY 2. That was a bush as well.

KAY 1. A larger one. It grew out of the compost heap. It had a nest full of blackbird's eggs in it when I first climbed it.

KAY 2. They grew old. A smug orange cat sat at the bottom of the tree and licked his whiskers. I hadn't expected the cat.

KAY 1. When I was twelve I climbed the beech tree at the edge of my forest.

KAY 2. It was enormous.

KAY 1. It was quite tall.

KAY 2. It had storeys like a house, a roof of leaves. Climbing to the top was a major expedition. I spent days there . . .

KAY 1 . . . lying motionless, squinting at the ground.

KAY 2. I was a tiger ready to drop on an antelope, just the tip of my tail twitching.

KAY 1. When I was twelve, I didn't believe I could ever grow out of pretend games . . .

KAY 2. I was a beautiful, savage, Indian squaw waiting to ambush a cowboy who was going to be terribly impressed . . .

KAY 1. Then somehow they grew difficult to believe in . . . I had other dreams.

KAY 2. When I was sixteen I left school. I lay under the beech tree and watched the squirrels chasing their tails, shooting along the branches as though they were on wires.

KAY 1. I felt . . . lucky. It was my life now. There was no reason for it ever to go wrong again.

KAY 2. From the top of my mountain you could see the road in the distance.

KAY 1. A minor road. Grass down its middle.

KAY 2. It wasn't impressive enough to warrant the entrance of a knight on a white charger, but it looked as though it might run to a mildly attractive American tourist.

KAY 1. It was a beautiful summer. The last time I was here. The air was full, light and seeds everywhere. Mist in the morning, dancing midges in the evening.

KAY 2 *walks slowly away to sit in chair.*

I lay and looked at it all and dreamed about my future. The places I was going to go. The people I would meet. How it was all going to *feel*. I could be anything. *Anything.*

The GHOST comes to stand at KAY 2's shoulder. KAY 2 is staring blankly from.

KAY 1. How did I get here? To this?

I didn't really believe I was going to be unique, world famous, extraordinary . . .

I always thought I'd feel unique.

(To KAY 2.) You'd no reason to get into this state! You'd no right.

The GHOST takes out a cigarette from KAY 2's pocket, lights it and puts it in KAY 2's mouth. She lets KAY 2 take a puff then removes it again. She feeds her puffs throughout the subsequent action.

KAY 1. I suppose I just drifted into it . . . I seemed to drift into everything. Sitting, just sitting. Chain smoking. Terrified. What was it Kay? What frightened you? It was just fear, crawling slowly through me like blood moving round my body. Even this place terrified me. My parents met here. That's probably why we kept coming back, reliving memories even then. It was chance, them meeting here—my mother's family and my father had double booked. So they shared. That was another hot summer they tell me. A double booking and a ridge of high pressure and twenty five years later here's Kay Douglas revisiting . . . terrified . . .

Even the light seemed wrong. Just slightly, as though there were a filter on the sun. A trace of sickly colour on everything like a badly developed film. Sometimes it seemed there were too many shadows, or that they were in

the wrong places . . . Little things. Nothing definite. Nothing I could be certain of.

And nothing moved.

I sat, like a mouse watching for the twitch of a paw outside the hole, and stared at everything. Nothing moved. Crazy!

I knew nothing would.

But neither could I, for terror.

Silence. Ringing in my ears on one note like a distant alarm bell, on and on and on . . . I couldn't move.

(Walks up to KAY 2.) Oh I had to move sometimes, let's not exaggerate, I wasn't that far gone. *(Bitterly.)* Didn't eat though did you? I'm still hungry.

It was as if I'd no reason to do anything. As if I'd known the reason once but forgotten what it was.

Oh Kay. Snap out of it! Come on. What's got into you?

KAY 2. What's got into me?

KAY 1. Got inside you, crawled into your head like a snake curling up under a rock. *Stopped you.*

The GHOST starts humming; she moves forward past KAY 1 and gently pushes KAY 2's head down to stare at her feet. She strokes the back of KAY 2's head gently, all the while watching KAY 1.

KAY 1. I felt it. It was *real*. A dead weight on my head. I was terrified. There I was, alone, trailing misery like blood in water. Sharks smell a drop of blood thirty miles away. I was leaking fear, staking myself out like raw bait . . . something smelt it.

GHOST *laughs softly.*

(To KAY 2.) What were you so scared of?!

KAY 2. Waking up in the dark . . .

KAY 1. *What?*

KAY 2. Waking up in the dark and feeling . . .

KAY 1 *(interrupts)*. That was months ago.

KAY 2. Just lying there dozing, fingers idly exploring your own body and there it is.

KAY 1. It was *nothing*.

KAY 2. A lump. No, it was worse than that, two lumps, like little plum stones inside the soft fruit.

KAY 1. They were *nothing*. They cut them out and they were *nothing*, just benign little blobs of fibre. That's all.

KAY 2. They were really there.

KAY 1. What's all the fuss about! That's *stupid*. What were you worrying about *them* for, it was over.

KAY 2. I felt them.

KAY 1. So my skin isn't immune to scalpels and tumours?

Whose is? I thought I'd found the seeds of death inside me, who doesn't carry them? I just thought mine were germinating a little early . . .

KAY 2. I never thought it would happen to me.

KAY 1 (*snaps*). Well it can!

It was *nothing*. A great fuss about *nothing*.

Look, I wasn't thinking about it really. It was just a bit of a shock at the time, a bit unexpected. You never do think anything like that is going to happen to you.

KAY 2. It could.

KAY 1. Well it didn't!

Pause.

I was brooding about it, depressing myself. I was brooding about it. (*Sigs/s.*) It's not as simple as that. It's everything.

There was a song I always used to sing, sitting in my beech tree staring at the road. (*Sings.*)

Queen Mary, Queen Mary my age is sixteen,
My father's a farmer on yonder green,

He's plenty o' money tae dress me sae braw,
But there's nae bonny laddie will take me awa.

That was me, dolled up to the nines and trembling with anticipation, waiting, just waiting for life to hit me. The

glorious unexpected. Excitement. I mean when I was sixteen I was thinking mainly in terms of some man dropping out of the sky and chucking flowers at me, but it was everything. Not just that. I was on the brink of it all. I couldn't wait. Now . . .

Here it comes out of the future, the unexpected, thundering down like a juggernaut to squash me flat. (*Looks at KAY 2.*) And here I am like a rabbit, blind and frozen with fear right in the middle of the road . . .

. . . I used to watch people streaming down the street, busy Saturday shopping crowds. Everyone glancing at the faces approaching them, eyes constantly rolling like greased pinballs in their heads, surrounded by the unknown, the unknowable, the potentially unexpected. Like bodyguards packed around American diplomats, eyes constantly on the move looking for killers. Survival instinct I suppose. Except that the unexpected is always that . . . unexpected. The crime writers' cliché, the warm corpse always looks surprised.

I've never seen a corpse, apart from Lenin's. Sheila and me went on a package tour to Moscow . . . Lenin's mummy is the dearest thing I've ever seen, a hunk of very old meat, and the reverence, the endless lines of worshippers (all in black as if they never got over his dying), seem somehow obscene. Thousands of stares falling on it seems to have blurred its edges so that it's melting like wax but the face is very faintly surprised . . . as if this isn't at all what he expected. And he's supposed to have changed history . . .

KAY 2. No-one's in control.

KAY 1. There I was, lying in my safe warm bed, thinking about what colour I was going to paint the living room, where I was going on holiday, and worrying about my overdraft, and there were those lumps inside me. In one split second my mind leaped from exploratory operations to radical mastectomy to death, and that's the future I carried into work and lived with for three weeks. Of course the lumps were there before I invented my morbid little scenario. When they turned out to be benign I abandoned it again. None of my imaginary futures is real. Only the terror is real. (*Looks at KAY 2.*)

KAY 2 (looks slowly round at GHOST.) Who are you?

GHOST. Kay.

KAY 1. Stop it!

GHOST. Hungry. (Opens mouth and breathes out a long slow breath. The sound of white noise starts as if it was the noise the GHOST was making. It cuts off at a peak again.)

KAY 2. A mouth. A great hot mouth, sucking us all down its gullet even while we're still kicking and crying then...

KAY 1 (shouts). Nothing!... Nothing at all.

KAY 2 stands up. The GHOST dresses her in an identical battered dressing gown to KAY 1's.

KAY 1. No-one's in control. Please... I want to stop now... I can't tell any more... You must understand... I can't, I don't know what I felt, how can I tell you? (Seems to be trying to work it out)... it was when I was waiting for the test results from the hospital, I took a few days off work and sat at home and scratched my stitches and watched telly. My little trouble was tagging on the skirts of a wave of world disasters. Every time I switched on it showed me twisted limbs and scorched cooked skin, bright foreign rubble and distant dusty explosions...

KAY 2... children on pin-thin legs with huge ancient eyes...

KAY 1. And I watched documentaries about world wars and similar slaughters, roomfuls of politicians and historians berating each other with hindsight. It's all so clear in retrospect, pin history on the map with little coloured flags and stab accusing fingers at it and scream 'Why didn't they see?'

KAY 2. Waking up in the dark...

KAY 1 (smort of disgust). Who am I kidding? I wasn't thinking about world history or worldwide suffering or... (Shakes her head)... All I cared about was my history, my future... my little humps... my little surprise presents... I needn't have worried, but I didn't know that...

Well there you go folks. Kay Douglas wants to know the answer to it all. Who doesn't? But Kay here wasn't content with just pondering it all in the odd half hour in the bath, oh

no, she only had to dream dreams and see visions and scare herself blind and deaf and dumb and stupid!... (Turns on KAY 2.) Didn't you!

The GHOST pushes KAY 2 into the chair again and turns and walks away into the shadows. White noise mixed with the jumbled disjointed sounds of radio, typewriter, train and KAY 2 singing start softly and grow to a crescendo during KAY 1's speech.

KAY 1. I can't tell you what happened next. I can't...

I just... I don't want to think about it! I haven't! (Hands on face, rocking backwards and forwards speaking quietly, urgently.) The whole of that room, that safe little room where I knew every scrape on the furniture, the whole of it was hanging over me... an unspoken, unknown threat. I couldn't move. Watching the day grow, the light getting thinner and greyer... the shadows crawling round the floor to lick my feet and suddenly... suddenly I thought I was waiting for something, I was sitting waiting for one moment, one second when I was going to see... I can't say it!

KAY 2 (hands to her ears). Stop it! Stop it!

KAY 1. Run Kay! RUN!

KAY 2 runs, falls, stumbles towards KAY 1 and hurts herself into her arms. They cling together. KAY 2 is shivering and panting.

KAY 1. I can't tell you what I saw. I don't... I just can't. (To herself.) It was real. It was. (Closes her eyes for a second, shivers.) Well... that's all of it. After that they found me wandering round and round my mountain as if I was looking for a way in.

KAY 2 (speaking into KAY 1's shoulder). Right foot, left foot, right foot, left foot, yes, yes, move, keep moving... right foot, left foot.

KAY 1. I was lucky. The woman who owned the cottage just looked in to check on me... they found me in just a damp dragged dressing gown with bare bloody feet, wandering, raving, running...

KAY 2. Keep moving, keep moving...

KAY 1. I was walking in circles. No-one understood that...

I wasn't running away, I was *running*. Just to move, just to stumble and gasp and move... that was escaping.

KAY 2. Right foot, left foot, good, good, good girl. Come on now...

KAY 1. Before dawn the wind rose, tugging the hair off my face, rushing into my lungs. Everything moved, sky and ground, struggling with the air, rolling and dancing with it... and I ran...

KAY 2. Move. Move.

KAY 1. With the light came gulls. Falling out of the sky, yelping and squabbling over fresh damp grubs... and I yelled and stamped my battered feet.

KAY 2. Come on Kay...

KAY 1. It was good. It was *good*. Stumbling and sobbing and cold and rough and sharp on my legs, water and stone and grass... I was out of that place, I'd got away... Then there were hordes of people. Lights everywhere. A clamour of voices all at once. Someone made me lie down...

KAY 2. Rough warm blankets.

KAY 1. I cried all over them all. Clung to them.

KAY 2. Arms holding me. Hands patting me. 'You're all right now.'

KAY 1. Blue lights spinning, ambulance, police, flash bulbs exploding...

KAY 2. And gulps and gulps and gulps of hot soup...

KAY 1. And I slept. When I woke up there were more of them. Nurses and journalists and my family...

KAY 2. But what happened? What happened? What happened?

KAY 1. I don't know... I don't know. I see things. I scared myself, that's all.

KAY 2 steps out of her arms. They look at each other for a second then KAY 2 exits.

It's all a big fuss about nothing really. I'm sorry. I blow things up, get them out of proportion.

Just my own ghosts. My own monsters.

Shelia was in to see me today. I bruised her arms. I couldn't let go: 'Your trouble is you're highly strung.' Maybe.

I saw it though. I saw it. Maybe something is there, waiting for us to go and look on it, sensing our fear and coming to suck on it... something evil... (Shakes her head abruptly.)

Look it was nothing really. All in my head. Nothing. I'm sorry... I'm... I'm sorry.

Pauses for a moment then exits.

ACT TWO

Scene One

PSYCHIATRIST *standing alone in same spot as KAY I at the start of Act One.*

PSYCHIATRIST. I don't believe in ghosts.

I remember thinking that might be a real handicap, 'cause I had a real fanatic on my hands. I thought it would be like wrestling with a bramble bush trying to get any kind of communication started . . . well . . . this isn't supposed to be an official report . . . you want to know what happened, from my point of view. It's just difficult to know how to start . . . everything's coloured with hindsight now, by what happened.

I suppose it's sheer fluke that I ever ended up by handling Kay Douglas's case at all. I mean I'm not long qualified, I'd only just been appointed to the hospital . . . if anyone had thought she was mentally ill I wouldn't have been handling it unperturbed. The assumption was that she'd had a minor breakdown which precipitated a form of fugue state . . . oh sorry, that's when someone under stress simply starts walking, some people travel 50 miles or more before they're stopped, they just keep moving their legs . . . that's what we thought had happened to Kay. It seemed all she needed was a little rest and reassurance. We wanted to find out what had disturbed her of course . . . and there was the problem of all the publicity surrounding her discovery, but it seemed a very simple case . . .

I was curious, yes, but . . . well all these Sunday paper sensations about the supernatural leave me a bit cold I'm afraid. I can't suspend disbelief long enough to manage even a sympathetic shudder. Something else scared me, something about the way she looked at me . . . I did feel a bit of a twinge when I heard where she'd been found. I used to spend every summer up at Glenbuchat when I was a kid . . . we rented that cottage, it was one of those coincidences that

seem so statistically improbable you end up examining them from every angle looking for some deeper significance. I never mentioned that link to Kay Douglas. It worried me. I suppose she'd created so many of her own associations for the place . . . frightening ones and . . . I think I felt . . . *jealous* in a way. That was my place, my *special* place. Oh I knew other families stayed there but I managed to forget that; it was ours, *mine*. Part of my childhood I suppose. I ran wild up there, made the forest a kind of jungle and roamed in it playing mad games, came home with twigs in my hair, blood on my knees and the hunger of a shoal of starved piranhas.

Always seemed to be summer. Clicked huh?

I remember the last year we went there, I must have been . . . sixteen or seventeen . . . I remember the feel of the air when it was first warm enough to shed the extra layers and *feel* the air all over. Daytime, the sun licking your flesh like a hot tongue . . . evening and all that burning skin soothed with coolness . . . First day of the holidays I used to belt out the cottage door and run for the big beech tree at the edge of the wood, legs pumping, shrieking 'Freedom!' at the top of my lungs before hanging upside down from the branches . . . So it was a special place, beautiful, beloved and very, very private. I didn't want to share all that with Kay . . . I suppose we may have walked and run and lain in the same places only a day apart, me and Kay . . . If's one of the things that seems so upsetting now . . . I mean . . . (*Throws, too upset suddenly to find words.*)

. . . I don't know how it happened. I don't. I know the events, the cold facts but there seems something more, so many coincidences like that . . . only they don't make sense. I don't know *how* to make sense of them . . .

Lights up slowly on KAY I in bed playing with a pack of cards.

And you always think . . . 'Maybe if someone else had handled that case . . . ?'

And I can't ever know. (*Walks slowly back to KAY I who is still absorbed in her game.*)

PSYCHIATRIST (to KAY). How are you feeling?

KAY 1. I'm all right. There's nothing wrong with me.

PSYCHIATRIST. Playing patience?

KAY 1. No. So when can I go home?

PSYCHIATRIST. I wouldn't know. I'm afraid.

KAY 1. Someone must know.

PSYCHIATRIST. I just wanted to talk to you for a few minutes.

KAY 1 (looks up sharply). Press?

PSYCHIATRIST shakes her head.

Well who then?

PSYCHIATRIST. Staff.

KAY 1. How do you mean?

PSYCHIATRIST. I just wanted to ask a few questions about your experiences that's all.

KAY 1. Well why? What for? Who are you?

(PSYCHIATRIST says nothing.) Look I'm sorry but I've had people in here asking me questions morning noon and night: 'How do you feel? Why weren't you wearing shoes? Does this hurt? Did you see ghosts? Could you roll over while we shove you full of tranquilisers . . . ?' So what do you want?

PSYCHIATRIST. It won't take long.

KAY 1. You're not a psychiatrist are you?

PSYCHIATRIST. I didn't know you'd been seeing one.

KAY 1. I haven't. I don't need to.

PSYCHIATRIST. I'm glad to hear it. Lovely view you have, you're lucky to have a bed by the window.

KAY 1. Yeah. It's hours of endless fun lying here looking at the sky.

PSYCHIATRIST. Why don't you get some papers sent in, listen to the radio or something? (KAY 1 stares at her coldly then goes on playing with the cards.)

PSYCHIATRIST consults notes.) Kay Douglas, age 24, employed as a secretary with firm of Thompson's Entrenching Tools . . .

KAY 1 (sotto voce). Thompson's Entrenching Tools. (Snorts.)

PSYCHIATRIST. Sorry?

KAY 1. Got a real ring to it hasn't it?

PSYCHIATRIST (carries on as if she hadn't spoken). . . . on March 12th you left to spend a week alone at an isolated cottage near Glenbuchat. On March 17th you were found wandering the hillside near the cottage wearing only a dressing gown . . . correct so far?

KAY 1. Look . . . I don't know if I want to go over all this again if you don't mind.

PSYCHIATRIST. You want me to stop?

KAY 1. I don't know . . . It's just . . .

PSYCHIATRIST. I could always come back later.

KAY 1. Oh Christ. No I'll get it over with. (Lies back and closes her eyes.)

PSYCHIATRIST (continues reading from notes). At the time you made no explanation of your condition apart from several confused statements about an alleged 'haunting' you had experienced at the cottage — medical evidence — shock, exposure . . . minor . . . lacerations . . . to . . . feet . . . (Writes.) Now. We think you may have had a very minor breakdown Miss Douglas, it's nothing to worry about. All I want to do is ask you a few questions to see if we can establish what kind of stress you were under. All right? (KAY 1 remains motionless.) Well now you'd been somewhat disillusioned shall we say, with your job hadn't you?

KAY 1 (sighs 'Oh God here we go again'). Yes!

PSYCHIATRIST. And you'd recently undergone a minor operation yes?

KAY 1. It was very minor.

PSYCHIATRIST. An exploratory operation for suspected cancer?

KAY 1. They were pretty sure it wasn't you know.

PSYCHIATRIST. Well we've got the details of that on your medical record . . . *(Makes note.)* . . . right . . . Now, you'd recently split up with your boyfriend hadn't you?

KAY 1. *What?*

PSYCHIATRIST. He left to take up a job in Saudi Arabia, is that right?

KAY 1. Who the . . . ! Who told you that? I haven't talked about that!

PSYCHIATRIST. I believe the information came from one of your workmates . . . Sheila . . . Thompson is it?

KAY 1. She didn't. She *wouldn't*.

PSYCHIATRIST. *(Looks at her for a moment.)* Is it true?

KAY 1. *(quiet)*. Yes. *(Reaches for her cigarettes.)*

PSYCHIATRIST. And you'd been very . . . distressed about it?
(KAY 1 offers her cigarette.) I don't thanks.

KAY 1. Do I have to answer these questions?

PSYCHIATRIST. Not if you don't want to.

KAY 1. *(lights up)*. It was months ago. I was over it. I didn't talk about it 'cause it's not really relevant. Yeah, I was unhappy but you get on with things, you know?

PSYCHIATRIST. He's in Saudi now is he?

KAY 1. *nods.*

I suppose he might have heard about all this. It's been in most British papers hasn't it?

KAY 1. Every one printed. Fame at last.

PSYCHIATRIST. But you haven't heard from him?

KAY 1. No . . . *(Laughs.)* No. Why would I?

PSYCHIATRIST. Just a thought . . . *(Looks through papers.)*

KAY 1. I don't quite see what you're . . .

PSYCHIATRIST. *(interrupts)*. You used to go to that cottage a lot as a child didn't you?

KAY 1. Every year.

PSYCHIATRIST. What made you want to go back?

KAY 1. I just saw it in the book. It was dead cheap in March . . . *(Shrugs.)*

PSYCHIATRIST. Were you happy there, as a child?

KAY 1. Yes. We had some good times.

PSYCHIATRIST. But it wasn't the same going back?

KAY 1. *shakes her head.*

Had it changed?

KAY 1. No, the time, the time had changed.

PSYCHIATRIST. You never saw anything there before though?

KAY 1. *(wary)*. How do you mean 'saw'?

PSYCHIATRIST. Any unusual . . . supernatural?

KAY 1. Why would I?

PSYCHIATRIST. Miss Douglas, when you were picked up you said you'd seen . . .

KAY 1. *(interrupts)*. So? I was in shock.

PSYCHIATRIST. You've since talked to quite a few people, the nurses, your parents, Sheila, trying to describe what you . . .

KAY 1. Hallucinations due to hunger.

PSYCHIATRIST. You claimed they were genuine.

KAY 1. I've changed my mind.

PSYCHIATRIST. I see.

KAY 1. Did you read the papers?

PSYCHIATRIST. Some of them.

KAY 1. 'Something nasty in the woodshed. What did Kay Douglas, 24, see creeping round her lonely cottage in the wilds of Scotland?'

'Kay Douglas running battered and bleeding from her remote holiday home had been terrorised by the supernatural . . . ' usually followed by three paragraphs on poltergeists.

The whole of Britain now thinks either that I've been pursued through the woods by an assortment of waiting laundry or that I'm some kind of head case.

PSYCHIATRIST. And what do you think?

KAY 1. I think . . . I think I probably imagined things.

PSYCHIATRIST. Why would you do that?

KAY 1 *shrugs*.

Because you were worried about things? The job? The operation?

KAY 1. I wasn't worried about things! (*Quieter*.) I wasn't depressed or . . . anything like it.

PSYCHIATRIST. So why would you imagine things?

KAY 1 *shrugs*.

Don't you have an explanation?

KAY 1. There isn't any rational explanation.

PSYCHIATRIST. So you are saying you saw something supernatural?

KAY 1. I'm not saying anything any more.

PSYCHIATRIST. I see.

KAY 1. Well what do you think happened? Do you have an explanation?

PSYCHIATRIST. I think you may have imagined it, yes.

KAY 1 (*stares at her for a long moment, then quieter*). Why would I do that?

PSYCHIATRIST. You were overwrought, distressed . . . perhaps you'd been overdoing things.

KAY 1 (*under breath*). Putting in overtime on the franking machine, sure.

PSYCHIATRIST. Sorry?

KAY 1. Nothing.

PSYCHIATRIST. Or maybe you wanted to make some kind of gesture.

KAY 1. Don't follow.

PSYCHIATRIST. Ranks with attempted suicide in a way, breakdown . . . Maybe you I wanted to show this bloke in Saudi something? It's a possibility . . .

KAY 1. *What!?*

PSYCHIATRIST. We've got to consider every . . .

KAY 1 (*interrupts*). That's ridiculous!

PSYCHIATRIST. Is it?

KAY 1. What do you mean, 'Is it?' It's crap!

PSYCHIATRIST. Maybe I better leave you to rest now Kay.

KAY 1. Just who are you anyway?

PSYCHIATRIST (*pauses*). I'm a psychiatrist. I work here.

KAY 1. Who said you could come and talk to me?

PSYCHIATRIST. I had the permission of the consultant, and your parents.

KAY 1. What about me? What if I don't want you to?

PSYCHIATRIST. Everyone just wants to get to the bottom of this Kay.

KAY 1. What's to discover? I imagined it all. Everyone agrees on that don't they?

PSYCHIATRIST. I'll come back later. (*Walks forward to position during opening speech*.)

KAY 1 (*face screws up in sudden distress*). Oh shit. Why can't you all just leave me alone?

KAY 2 *wanders on. She is wearing the same battered dressing-gown as KAY 1 in previous set. Her feet are bandaged. She watches PSYCHIATRIST.*

PSYCHIATRIST. It was always the same. Looking up under her fringe, a dark wary look, mouth sealing itself thinner and tighter . . . I was the enemy, the thing that was imprisoning her in this bare white room and forcing her to stare at herself too intently . . . Slipping out answers sideways, grudgingly letting them escape past her teeth . . . I think she was ashamed. 'A breakdown? Me?' I couldn't emphasise how commonplace they were either. I think that made it worse . . . she

wanted a wilder more exclusive kind of madness, she could live with that better. And yet . . . it didn't fit. I'd read her 'confessions' to the press, retold and rehashed a dozen times . . . there was something strange about them, something that nagged at me. She never actually said what she'd seen . . . She would give me this look, a blank wary stare, like something glaring out through bars with undefeated hatred. I kept up the brisk professional manner, but inside . . . I shivered.

I don't think I really thought she was upset about the job, the operation . . . I don't know what I thought . . . still don't . . .

KAY 2. It was real.

KAY 1 (*without looking up from cards*). Shut up.

KAY 2. I felt it.

PSYCHIATRIST. She was *terrified!* And her fear, because it seemed to have no source . . . frightened me.

KAY 1 (*to PSYCHIATRIST*). So you're a psychiatrist?

PSYCHIATRIST (*From*). That's right.

KAY 1. Aren't you a bit young?

PSYCHIATRIST. I'm still learning.

KAY 1. And you're practising on me?

PSYCHIATRIST. No. I know what I'm doing.

KAY 1. Why do you want to talk to me?

PSYCHIATRIST (*turns*). I thought it might be helpful.

KAY 1. Who for?

PSYCHIATRIST. Both of us.

Pause.

KAY 1. What's your name?

PSYCHIATRIST (*smiles*). Kay, Kay Nichols.

KAY 1. Coincidence.

PSYCHIATRIST. Mine's short for Katherine.

Pause.

KAY 1. I fancied being a shrink once.

PSYCHIATRIST. Why didn't you?

KAY 1 (*shrugs*). Didn't get the chance. Thought all you had to do was want to be something. Hadn't reckoned on exams.

PSYCHIATRIST. About your job, what exactly is it you don't like about it?

KAY 1. Here we go. I've told you.

PSYCHIATRIST *waits*.

Look it's just . . . *dull*, you know, monotonous.

PSYCHIATRIST. Isn't it the job you wanted?

KAY 2 (*quiet*). Type letters, file letters, make coffee . . .

(*Continues to repeat this in quiet chant under subsequent dialogue.*)

KAY 1. It's a job.

PSYCHIATRIST. Why did you take it?

KAY 1. It was offered. There's a recession on you know . . . (*Stops herself*) Sorry.

PSYCHIATRIST. But you thought you'd get something better?

KAY 1. Like your job for instance?

PSYCHIATRIST *waits again*.

I'd like something more interesting than that's all.

KAY 2. Another eight hours, another pebble on the beach, unchanging, undramatic. The seconds of my life trickling down the plughole . . .

KAY 1. I could think of things I'd rather do with my time.

KAY 2. . . . precious as blood.

KAY 1. How do you get to be a psychiatrist?

PSYCHIATRIST (*without turning*). I took a medical degree, then I specialised.

KAY 1. So what age are you? 25? 26?

PSYCHIATRIST. 25.

KAY 1. Did you take your exams early or what?

PSYCHIATRIST. I'm still studying.

KAY 1. Are you good at it?

PSYCHIATRIST. I hope so . . . (*Speaking front again.*) . . . same eyes, same age, same name . . .

Sorry Kay, suppose I'm just lucky.

All through subsequent action KAY 1 fiddles incessantly with cards. KAY 2 stands motionless turning a blank stare from one to the other.

PSYCHIATRIST. She was my first solo case. Before that it had been so easy, school, exams: endless pens dancing over endless blank sheets to the accompaniment of approving ticks in the margin. It was all a wonderful game with just enough challenge to give easy win after easy win a real sparkle. I've always run at things early, jumped fences I wasn't grown for. I used to think I was going to be a child prodigy once . . . well I grew up, so I blew that one . . . but fully qualified and practising psychiatry at 25? Oh that's a triumph, that's a real he awake, count your blessings and smirk in nauseating self congratulation that one. I was a success story . . . That's what made all this such a shock, the amazement, the horrified amazement I felt looking at this unexpected body lying across my path, glaring balefully at me waiting to bite my feet when I tried to jump over her . . . I didn't know what was wrong with her. I didn't know how to begin. At first I thought she was a bit of a fake, a melodrama addict. The way she sat, held her head, everything screamed . . . 'I have been through a terrible ordeal, I've touched life at its raw core, gazed on demons and now I suffer for it.' (*Hand on brow.*) but then . . . I saw that underneath the prickles she was so scared and she was trying to hide it . . . that's what this dumb with suffering bit was all about. She was trying to play it down.

Then I thought: Maybe I'll botch this. Maybe in the glare of a thousand flashbulbs poised to capture my learned and precocious conclusions for the nation's press, I'm going to fall flat on my face. And for the first time in my life I really believed that I could fail. Not as an idea that gave the edge to some heady gambling with life but as a *fact*. I wasn't in control. I was terrified.

All that came out were the stiff formal catch phrases, copybook questions that built a wall between us.

KAY 1. Why do you want to know about my dreams? I've told you all this already.

PSYCHIATRIST *does not turn.*

KAY 1 (*sighs*). I saw a figure, a woman, sitting on the bed, stopping me putting on the light . . . that sort of thing.

PSYCHIATRIST (*turns*). How did that make you feel?

KAY 1. I was scared. Couldn't even doze off, dreamt it again.

PSYCHIATRIST. So you stopped sleeping?

KAY 1 *nods.*

Go on.

KAY 1. Well then I just sat. Like I couldn't move. I was afraid to move.

PSYCHIATRIST. Why?

KAY 1. I don't know. I felt something . . . terrible . . . was just about to happen. Everything looked . . . wrong, like in a nightmare you know? It's all familiar but it's *wrong* . . . frightening . . .

Well that's it. I ran away . . .

PSYCHIATRIST. Nothing else happened?

KAY 1 (*pause*). No.

PSYCHIATRIST. You said something about a figure walking?

KAY 1. Oh yeah, that was the first day. I was up the hill and I saw this figure down below, sort of pacing the ground without moving . . . it . . . it looked like they vanished. (*Struggs.*)

PSYCHIATRIST. Did that frighten you?

KAY 1. I wasn't sure what I'd seen.

PSYCHIATRIST. But you've seen things like that before?

KAY 1. What?

PSYCHIATRIST. A little Victorian lady, the figure of a man . . .

KAY 1 (*sob*). Damn you Sheila Thompson . . . Yes. All right. Yes I see things.

PSYCHIATRIST. So what do you . . . ?

KAY 1 (*interrupts*). I see things! That's all. I I don't know why or how or what I feel about it. O.K.? (*Busts herself with cards again.*)

PSYCHIATRIST (*from*). Yes . . . I believe she saw some thing.

I had dreams too. They started the first night after Kay Douglas was admitted . . . a dream I'd had before . . .

There's a track you can see from the top of the hill at Glenbuchat, a minor road with grass down its middle. It's lined with trees. I dream I'm dying and as I'm dying I move further and further along this road, my feet nearly silent on the worn overgrown tarmac, a gentle green sunlight filtering down through the leaves . . . I know at the other end of the road is something that will swallow me up, but I'm not afraid. I try, but I can't be afraid . . . just the soft light, the soft footsteps, the quiet sound of the leaves overhead . . . and a walk that stretches further with each step I take . . . as though I were treading the road backwards under my feet but never moving . . .

The first night I saw Kay I dreamt that twice . . . after that it filled my sleep. Every time I dozed off . . . I dreamt it again . . .

KAY 1 is rapidly laying out another spread of cards.

KAY 1 (*referring to cards*). It's something to do.

PSYCHIATRIST. The cards. Why did she spend every second juggling that pack of cards?

Flicking and fluttering them around her bandaged fingers like a crippled conjurer.

KAY 1. It passes the time.

PSYCHIATRIST. Making them leap over each other like little paper acrobats then bringing them all to rest again.

KAY 1. I tell my fortune. Read my future in the cards, that sort of stuff.

PSYCHIATRIST (*grrts*). Do you think it works?

KAY 1. Don't know. (*Shrugs*.) Sometimes.

PSYCHIATRIST. How would it?

KAY 1 (*looks at her*, 'What are you driving at?'). I don't know . . . It's like time's elastic, you know? It's free, it does what it likes, we're just carried along on the swell. (*With growing animation.*) Here's your past here, (*Indicates cards*.) the things that have happened to you, but you don't understand the implication of them, you've no way of telling what the real effect of even the smallest action is going to be . . . so the cards treat it like an equation you see, there's what you've done (*Points*.) and here's the possible outcomes . . . the future you can never predict . . .

PSYCHIATRIST. So you believe everything's predetermined?

KAY 1. No, no, we make our own futures, but blind, like slipping on banana peel, we're never in control, we can't see what the end result of our actions will be, we just line up and wait for the unexpected to knock us sideways . . .

PSYCHIATRIST. What's that card mean then?

KAY 1. The Queen of Spades? In that position it means someone who's going to have a profound effect on my future, woman, perceptive, good at managing people . . . reversed like that . . . (*Pauses then quotes from memory.*) A thoroughly evil woman whose attractive exterior conceals hatred, cruelty, treachery, malice and deceit . . .

Pause.

KAY 1. Do you think life works out for the best?

PSYCHIATRIST. I don't know. Sometimes.

KAY 1. How about history? Does that work out for the best?

PSYCHIATRIST. Depends what you mean.

KAY 1. Nothing we can do about it either way I suppose.

PSYCHIATRIST. I suppose not. What's your future then?

KAY 1 (*quiet*). It isn't there. I do spread after spread . . .

Nothing. (*Stares up at PSYCHIATRIST.*)

PSYCHIATRIST (*nervous laugh*). So it doesn't always work then?

KAY 1 says nothing.

KAY? Why did you ask who I was, that first day I talked to you? You'd seen me before that, the first night you were admitted.

KAY 1. I don't remember.

PSYCHIATRIST. You saw Sheila and your parents the next day didn't you?

KAY 1. Yes.

PSYCHIATRIST. And that's when you told them about the dreams?

KAY 1. Yes. Why?

PSYCHIATRIST. No reason. *(No longer to KAY 1.)* I know she saw me. I know.

KAY 1. I don't remember seeing you.

PSYCHIATRIST. Well you'd been sedated. I looked in with the consultant for a moment that's all. *(No longer to KAY 1.)* They were struggling to keep her under the covers, she kept thrashing dopey limbs as if she was trying to keep walking. The consultant said 'Maybe you should give her another sedative' and she looked up at him then past him to me and she froze with that stare . . .

KAY 1 *(as if she has been racking her memory.)* I don't remember. Sorry.

PSYCHIATRIST. I better leave you to rest now. We can talk again tomorrow.

KAY 1. Won't I get home tomorrow?

PSYCHIATRIST. Perhaps.

KAY 1 *(Looks down at cards)*. I don't feel I ever will sometimes.

PSYCHIATRIST. Oh come on Kay, you've only been here a couple of days! It can't be as bad as all that.

KAY 1 *just stares at her*.

Well . . . I'll see you tomorrow.

KAY 1 *nods*. PSYCHIATRIST *walks away from her forwards*. KAY 2 *now wanders to stand between them*.

KAY 1. I don't think she believes in me. She thinks I faked it all.

KAY 2 *(insistently)*. I see things.

PSYCHIATRIST. I don't understand her.

KAY 1. She thinks I'm spoiled, that I'm throwing a tantrum because I haven't got a cushy job like hers . . . because life didn't turn out the way I always felt it would . . .

KAY 2. Dropped me in my cot and talked me to sleep with stories about rabbits . . .

PSYCHIATRIST. I think I upset her . . .

KAY 1. I'd've liked a job like hers . . .

KAY 2. Take my exams and travel the world . . .

KAY 1. *Did I fake it all?*

KAY 2. Something out of the dark, scenting me, hunting me . . . warning breath on my neck.

PSYCHIATRIST. What could she have seen there anyway?

KAY 2. Always summer. The sun licking your flesh like a hot tongue . . .

KAY 1. That place . . . it's beautiful.

KAY 2. The air was full, mist in the morning, dancing midges in the evening . . .

PSYCHIATRIST. I don't understand. I don't understand what's wrong with her.

KAY 1. What's wrong with me?

KAY 2. Seeds of death inside me . . . the unexpected, thundering out of the future like a juggernaut.

PSYCHIATRIST. If it was just stress, some man, her job, why would she frighten me?

KAY 2. I'm not in control.

KAY 1. This feeling . . . something terrible's just about to happen.

KAY 2. I'm not in control.

KAY 1. I won't be afraid. I won't! *(Pause.)*

PSYCHIATRIST. If I could just once have broken through the barbed wire and touched her. Whatever it was that terrified her, it *can't* have been anything we couldn't have helped her with . . . (Speaking to KAY 2.) Oh Kay.

KAY 2. Nothing. Nothing at all.

Light fades.

PSYCHIATRIST (quiet). Kay.

Darkness.

The PSYCHIATRIST now speaks with dead flat voice of the

GHOST.

GHOST. Kay.

KAY 1. Put the light on Kay, reach out, that's it, come on, come on!

GHOST. Hungry.

KAY 1. Oh no. Oh please don't.

GHOST. Hungry.

KAY 1. Don't, DON'T!

GHOST. Kay.

KAY 1 screams. The light goes on. The PSYCHIATRIST is sitting on the bed holding KAY 1's shoulder with one hand and the light switch with the other.

PSYCHIATRIST. Kay. Wake up, Kay!

KAY 1. Oh Jesus.

PSYCHIATRIST. You were having a dream. It's all right now. It's over. It's all right.

KAY 1. I thought . . . it was there again . . . I thought . . .

PSYCHIATRIST. It's O.K.

KAY 1. Have you got a hanky?

(PSYCHIATRIST hands her one.) Thanks. (Blows her nose.) Thank you.

PSYCHIATRIST. Was it the same dream?

KAY 1. Mmmm.

PSYCHIATRIST. Do you want something to help you sleep?

KAY 1 nods. PSYCHIATRIST gets her a sleeping pill.

KAY 1. Putting in overtime?

PSYCHIATRIST. I was just working late on some notes.

KAY 1. Am I that fascinating?

PSYCHIATRIST smiles and hands her a pill.

I'm sorry. I was so scared. I'm sorry.

PSYCHIATRIST. That's O.K.

KAY 1. I don't understand it . . . I don't know what it is . . . I'm not faking all this you know.

PSYCHIATRIST. I know.

KAY 1. I thought you didn't believe me.

PSYCHIATRIST. I don't think I did at first . . . (Hesitates.)

No, you're not faking.

Slowly they grin at each other.

Take your pill now.

KAY 1. What is it then? What's wrong with me?

PSYCHIATRIST. You've just had a minor breakdown, that's all, you're going to be all right.

KAY 1 (studies her for a moment). You know you asked me about seeing you that first night? I did see you. I remembered. But . . . it scared me . . .

PSYCHIATRIST. Why?

KAY 1. I recognised you. But I don't remember seeing you before. Ever.

PSYCHIATRIST. You weren't in the most rational frame of mind you know.

KAY 1. I'm afraid. I'm so afraid.

PSYCHIATRIST. Why Kay? What is it?

KAY 1 (almost to herself). Fate. Chance. A blind, brute force that sits in me and everyone and gambles our tiny lives, second by second . . . a blind brute force . . . I'm not

different you know, there's nothing special about me, none of us are in control . . . but I . . . see things . . .

PSYCHIATRIST (*gentle*). I don't understand Kay. What do you see?

KAY 1 *hesitates*.

What did you see at . . .

KAY 1 (*interrupts*). I want to tell you. (*Stops, biting her lip.*)

PSYCHIATRIST. Take your pill.

She swallows it obediently.

You can tell me tomorrow.

KAY 1. I will. I'll tell you everything . . .

PSYCHIATRIST. Tomorrow.

KAY 1. I'll tell you tomorrow.

PSYCHIATRIST. Try and get some sleep now. (*Moves to exit, pauses.*) Goodnight.

KAY 1 *stares forward blankly. She doesn't respond.*

PSYCHIATRIST *exits. Lights fade.*

Scene Two

Lights up on KAY 1, in spot she was in at start Act One. KAY 2 is seated in the chair exactly as she was at end of Act One.

KAY 1. I couldn't move. Something terrible was just about to happen. I was waiting like a mouse watching for the movement of a paw outside its hole . . . a rabbit crouched in the road with headlamps in its eyes . . . I couldn't escape . . .

Very faintly the sound of someone singing 'Queen Mary' is heard, then on top of it KAY 2 also on soundtrack, whispering:

Type letters, file letters.

I'm going to be a rock star, a rally driver,

A hot mouth, a great hot mouth.

What difference does it make? What difference does it make?

Endless pens dancing over endless blank sheets.

Easy win after easy win.

Twisted limbs and scorched cooked skin . . .

I can fail. I can fail . . .

All phrases whispered in a chant, muttered and repeated, overlapping with each other, as the volume builds up the same phrases are played backwards on the soundtrack adding chaos to the repeated murmur. The volume surges up and down in a feverish mass of sound.

KAY 2 *looks round at KAY 1; they stare at each other for a few seconds then KAY 2 rises and offers her seat. KAY 1 walks over and seats herself. KAY 2 remains standing at the back of the chair.*

The PSYCHIATRIST enters. She stares at KAY 1. Her lips form the words, 'Kay? What is it? Kay?' But she is not audible above the mess of noises. She starts to walk towards KAY 1. As she does so the light goes down until only the two KAYs are lit. The PSYCHIATRIST vanishes into the shadows. The noise reaches a crescendo then cuts out.

KAY 1 (*stirs*). Why is it so dark?

KAY 2 (*hesitating, distressed*). When I was two . . . my father . . . he talked me to sleep with a bedtime story . . . He talked away the dark.

KAY 1 . . . and I fell asleep, safe in the shadows and his voice . . .

KAY 1. Creeping through the wood, I was a tiger . . . a

hunter . . . Running . . .

KAY 2 (*trying to force the words out*). And I saw, I saw . . .

KAY 1. A rabbit.

KAY 2. It had no head. Oh Mum! It had no head!

KAY 1. And I ran, hunted, to escape what ate the rabbit . . . not the fox or cat, but the force that moved their killing jaws and fed their hunger . . .

KAY 2 (*frantic*). And it could eat me . . . It could!

KAY 1. When I was twenty-four . . . (Stops, shaking, tries again.) . . . When I was twenty-four I went back . . . to the cottage . . . (Starts to get up.)

KAY 2 (telling a kid's story). Kay went to a little house and Kay sat in a big armchair, all alone, in the dark, and Kay saw . . . she saw . . .

The GHOST starts to move into KAY 1's light.

KAY 2 (quiet at first growing rapidly louder). Run Kay, run Kay, run Kay, run Kay. RUN!

KAY 1 (yells in terror, each word distinct). I don't want to die!

The GHOST grabs her from behind. KAY 1 screams. Blackout.

KAY 2 (singing in darkness).

Queen Mary, Queen Mary, my age is sixteen.
My father's a farmer on yonder green.

He's plenty o' money the dress me sae braw
But there's nae bonny laddie will tak me awa.

Lights up. The PSYCHIATRIST is alone on stage. She cradles her arms as if still holding KAY 1.

PSYCHIATRIST. It wasn't my fault. It wasn't. It was an accident. You have to believe me, it was an accident!
(Slowly lowers her arms, gets herself under control again.)

Shock. Her heart just . . . stopped. I don't know why, if I knew that . . . (Stops herself.) It was an accident. It was the end of a long line of accidents. I revolve them round and round in my head. If I hadn't been on the case, if she hadn't been in such a state, if neither of us had ever gone to that cottage . . . if I hadn't tried to touch her, break in on her terror . . .

It was an accident.

It all comes to the same thing, she's dead, what does 'why' matter?

It all comes to the same thing in the end.

What difference does it make?

What did she see? Me. Same age, same eyes, same name, same memories . . . different set of accidents. (Shrugs.) She

saw things. Maybe that showed her something more. I don't know. I don't understand any of it. It changes everything. Maybe I'll change my job. I've got to get away by myself, sort things out. It changes everything. That's what I felt looking down at her surprised dead face, shock, not that something like this could happen at all but that it could happen to me. You never think it will do you?

I feel I want to move, change names, job, everything. All the people and places that were so comfortable and familiar suddenly look alike. Like something in a nightmare, as if she left me her way of looking at them sideways . . . I've got to move, to run, to live past this somehow, I must . . . but I don't see how. I've fallen over a cliff I didn't know was there. I can see Kay lying at the bottom . . . but I'm still falling.