

NET 'N' NEST

A play in four acts by Abi Morgan

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ACT ONE

Sam, the office of a new web start-up company in a creative part of town, sunlight casts its light. Various curios cover the desks and floor; a poster of Ian Curtis part of the general collage of Post-it Notes and artwork pinned to the wall. A large server glows from a back room and outside, the distant orchestra of traffic and sirens is just audible. Lights up on ROSE, early 20s, who sits illuminated by a screen, surfing the net. Oddball in Converse and shorts with a style of her own, she absently eats a bagel, listening to music. It is loud, thrashing and up-to-the-minute.

ROSE: It sticks.

TOM: Huh?

Offstage, TOM is struggling with the door. Also early 20s, gangly, geeky but handsome.

ROSE: Just shove it.

TOM slams the door with his foot, and enters smiling gratefully, carrying a large package and a quartet of takeaway coffees balanced precariously in a cardboard tray. He slides the tray and the parcel down on the desk.

TOM: Thanks.

ROSE nods, barely looking at him, lost in her work. Reaching a hand out, she takes a coffee, without looking up.

ROSE: Black?

TOM: Yeah. Dan likes it black.

ROSE slides the coffee down, taking another. She sips, nods her thanks, resumes working.

ROSE: You're over there.

ROSE points, TOM nods, pulling off his jacket, looking for a place to hang it.

Nice jacket.

TOM: It's kinda too tight for me.

ROSE: Don't hang it on the chair. Dan hates it on the chair.

TOM scoops up his jacket, pulls off his bag and sits, leaning back, trying it for size.

Stan used to sit there but he left.

TOM: I didn't meet Stan.

ROSE: Big falling out. Huge.

TOM: Yeah?

ROSE: Short guys are like that.

TOM: He was short?

ROSE: About your size.

TOM: Right. *[Beat]* I'm 5'9".

ROSE: All the guys are tall in my family. You look smaller.

I guess you're keen.

ROSE laughs, really looking at him, revelling. TOM sees he's been had.

TOM: Right... Right, the funny girl. *[Beat]* You've got...

ROSE wipes cream cheese off her chin.

He said eight so...

TOM holds out his hand, ROSE smiles, shakes.

Tom...

ROSE: Rose. So you're the brain?

TOM shrugs, a little shy, a little embarrassed.

TOM: I am the brain. Did Dan tell you that?

ROSE: He's been talking about it all week. 'The brain is coming. The brain is coming.'

TOM laughs.

If Dan likes you then that must make you super-amazing.

Dan. Amazing thinks you. The brain is amazing. That's, like, off the Richter scale of amazability.

TOM: Is that even a word?

ROSE: It is now.

TOM: So that's where you sit?

ROSE: Where I sit, when I'm not sitting in your chair.

TOM: I wasn't sure if it would be open.

ROSE: They gave you the code?

TOM: Yeah.

ROSE: If you know the code, you can walk straight in.

TOM nods, hovers, taking in the room, quietly revelling in it.

Joe's normally last in, Marco's close behind, Susie'll be in by half past every time. But Dan? Dan never gets in before... nine. He likes breakfast. He eats slowly. You can leave him with a sandwich and come back two hours later and he's still on the second bite. He likes chicken. With avocado.

Seasoning. He hates mayonnaise.

TOM: Right.

ROSE: If he asks you.

TOM: Thanks.

ROSE: Because he will ask you. To get him lunch. And they always get it wrong.

TOM: They?

ROSE: Before Stan, there was a thin guy, did a funny thing with his tongue when he ate. And then Marcia, she lasted two days. He's allergic to eggs. She forgot to mention no mayonnaise with his salad. Almost killed him.

TOM: Really.

ROSE: The throat closes. You have to cut a hole in the trachea, feed in the empty casing of a ballpoint pen.

TOM, listening, clearly horrified.

TOM: Really?

ROSE smiles again, TOM has been had again.

You're good at this.

ROSE: I am, aren't I? What's in the box?

ROSE peers over at the large square package, now resting on the desk.

TOM: I don't know. I just signed for it at the door.

ROSE offers Tom some gum.

It's a great remix. I heard they brought forward the release date.

ROSE: It was leaked.

TOM: Yeah. I downloaded it months ago.

ROSE: *[eyeing package]* He doesn't work here.

TOM: The courier said we were expecting it.

ROSE: We. That's good. We is good. You're going to fit in.

TOM: What am I going to do about the parcel?

ROSE leans across TOM's desk, provocatively, eyeing his straggly moustache.

ROSE: I don't know, Tom. What's the parcel saying to you?

TOM eyes it, considering.

TOM: It's saying 'Where's my man.' It's saying inside me is the vital organ to save a man's life. If it does not arrive at the necessary address of the recipient of that organ... *[reading label]* a Mr. Red, then someone has lost a life with no chance

of saving another. It's saying futility. It's saying pointlessness. It's saying you might as well give up now. If you can't even answer the door to a courier and take the right package for the right guy, then what are you doing thinking you can work for one of the most exciting start-up companies in the UK at this precise moment?

ROSE: Yeah. I give you a week. It's your first job?

TOM: No. Yes.

ROSE: It's the first day of your first job.
ROSE *presses an ear to the box, listens.*
Yep, I can hear it beating, Tom. Just remember: no mayonnaise. Or peppers. Mushrooms. Onions. Red or white. But oddly not nuts. Peanuts. He loves peanuts.

TOM: And Ian Curtis.
TOM *points to the poster. ROSE smiles, gesturing as if to a sacred deity.*

ROSE: Ian Curtis is God.

TOM: You obviously know Dan pretty well.

ROSE: Kind of. I know what sandwiches he likes. You'll be fine. You talk like the rest of them. It's nice to be around. Bright people. Bright interesting funny people, like...
TOM *eyes the different desks, playing a game, trying to guess which desk belongs to whom.*

TOM: Joe? Marco? Susie?
ROSE *corrects him, pointing.*

ROSE: Marco. Susie. Joe.

TOM: And you?

ROSE: I hotdesk. [*Beat*] He won't talk to you much the first week. Keep your head down. Love Ian Curtis. Stay late. If he asks you to do anything, you do it.

TOM: Right.

ROSE: I know people who've been trying to get a job here their whole life and he won't even touch them.

TOM: It took six months and a double first in computer science... and I got a friend who knew a friend who married a girl who needed a favour from a guy who knew Dan pretty well to say my mum slept with Ian Curtis.

ROSE: You told him you were the son of Ian Curtis? [*Silence*]
You are a Joy Division love child?

TOM: A lie told often enough becomes the truth.

ROSE: Good quote. Not yours.

TOM: Lenin.
ROSE *laughs, quietly enthralled by TOM, sensing a kindred spirit.*

ROSE: How old are you?

TOM: Twenty.

ROSE: What year is it?

TOM: 2008.

ROSE: Ian Curtis died May 18th 1980.
Pause. TOM blushes.

ROSE: I think it's brilliant. It's passion... You wanted to passionately work here. People are passionate here. I mean, in many ways, you walk in and it's like everyone is working but it doesn't feel like a job, everyone so wants to be here. [*Pause*]
What time is it?

TOM: Ten past eight. [*Pause*] Is there a bathroom?
ROSE *points up.*

ROSE: I'll take the package if you like. It's 249 Fallon Street. This is 429. You have to go way past...

TOM: Really?

ROSE: Yeah. I've got to be out of here by quarter past so...

TOM: Thanks.
TOM *makes to go, hesitates, placing his hands on the box.*

It's two million registered users drawn to its brilliance for finding websites that match their goals and people...

ROSE: ...who can help them achieve their dream.

TOM: It is a dream machine, using the best clustering technology to translate these dreams into reality.

ROSE: Offering a bespoke interfacing service for your average Joe looking for a way out of the hole they are in.

TOM: It's the IT guy who wants to work for NASA...

ROSE: ...who finds himself on the space program nine months later.

TOM: It's the bored teenager in...

ROSE: ...the middle of nowhere...

TOM: ...who wants to work on a presidential campaign in the US, he gets through to the election campaign manager who sees that this is a future White House speechwriter and plucks him from obscurity on a six-month work placement to write the inaugural speech.

ROSE: It's beautiful.
ROSE *presses her ear to the box.*
Yep. They're clapping.
TOM *smiles, makes to go.*

ROSE: It took you six months to get this job? I've been here every day for two years. I've read up everything about this company and Dan that there is. Ian Curtis love child? That's genius.

TOM: I was going to ask... holidays? Do you get holidays?

ROSE: No they pretty much work here full time.

TOM: They?

ROSE: Joe, Marco, Susie.

TOM: And you?

ROSE: Me? I'm here every day. There's nowhere else I'd rather be. I mean, look at this place. [*Pause*] Say hello to your new home, Tom.
TOM *grins and exits. ROSE scoops up a basket from under her chair, laden with sandwiches. She stops by TOM's computer and taps some keys and exits, leaving a packet of sandwiches on TOM's desk. A few moments later, SUSIE enters. She is cool, with a relaxed look. She unpacks her bag and sits in front of the same screen ROSE was working at.*

TOM: Hi.
New Dawn Fades by Joy Division slowly plays, coming from TOM's computer.

SUSIE: Nice choice. Dan's a Joy Division nut.

TOM: Yeah, Rose was saying

SUSIE: Rose?

TOM: The blonde girl?

SUSIE: No Rose, sorry.
TOM *hesitates, sinking down in his chair.*
Just me, Joe, Marco and...

TOM: ...Dan. Right.
TOM *scoops up sandwiches, considers.*

SUSIE: Damn. I missed the sandwich girl.
SUSIE *hesitates, spying a piece of gum stuck to her desk.*
Hey, did you stick gum on my desk?

TOM: No... No... Must have been someone else.

SUSIE: So you're a Curtis nut? If you like Curtis... I've got a track for you.
SUSIE *is already tapping the keyboard on her computer, downloading the track. TOM smiles, sinks into his chair, eating his sandwich. He's home. New Dawn Fades by Joy Division plays through.*

Blackout

ACT TWO

12 noon, the office of a successful TV production company, a wide open space, full of life and character. ANNA, early 30s, ties down a bunch of helium-filled balloons and tries to hide them next to a man dressed as ELVIS who is hiding in a high-backed sofa. On her desk a gaudy cake and the package.

ANNA: Are you OK there? It won't be long. It's so kind of you.

ELVIS: Great.

FIN, late 20s, well-kept, in cashmere and understated shoes, sits at a desk, a foaming wheatgrass shake in a takeaway cup by his side.

FIN: What's Elvis doing here?

ANNA: He's on loan. Celebrity Cookshop. They need him back by one.

FIN nods, looking to ANNA who is arranging candles on the cake.

FIN: Nice touch. It says 'Will You Marry Me?'

ANNA: The JT show was doing an early Valentines Day make-over.

I pinched it from the set. Do you think he'll guess?

FIN: Is the package for him?

ANNA: [*shrugs*] Sandwich girl just dropped it by. But it's the wrong floor. [*eyeing drink*] Why do you drink that stuff?

FIN: So that I am the vital, gifted and sane person that you see today.

ANNA: You know it's just grass, right?

FIN: So where's birthday boy?

ANNA: In the building. But be calm, he's on tenterhooks.

FIN: Is it today?

ANNA: She was due last week. So everyday he thinks it's coming.

FIN: Wow.

ANNA: They loved his show.

FIN: Seriously?

ANNA: 'Comedy doesn't get any better.'

FIN takes the paper from ANNA's hands, reading.

FIN: Wow, at last Sam Grange has taste. He definitely has taste.

He hated that thing about...

ANNA: ...the monkey.

FIN: And we all hated the thing about the monkey. This one he gets.

ELVIS: Excuse me...

ANNA: Sorry. Sorry. Let me get you a drink, er...?

ELVIS: Elvis.

ANNA: That's actually your name?

ELVIS stares back at ANNA unamused. ANNA already moving on.

ELVIS: Water is fine. It's just...

ANNA: I know. I am sorry. I really appreciate it. I promise I won't keep you waiting there any longer than I have to but you know... I don't want to kill the surprise. Did you get the card?

FIN: I was meant to get the card? I have the memory of a goldfish.

WILL, late 30s, enters, harassed, clothes dragged on, probably

slept in from the night before, carrying a pile of DVDs and a laptop, clutching a newspaper, beaming.

Hey Will.

ANNA hides the cake on ELVIS's lap, still out of sight.

WILL: Did you see they loved it?

ANNA: Yeah it's great.

WILL's phone rings, he ignores it.

'It's a landmark for British television.'

FIN: The paper says it.

WILL: Four-and-a-half stars. Grange never gives four-and-a-half stars.

ANNA: Will, your phone...

The phone stops ringing.

WILL: [*reading*] 'Comedy doesn't get much better than this.'

It's great. Anna, can you set up a meeting for three? I need to say thank you.

WILL eyes the package, moving towards it.

Is that for me? Only the rushes were going to be here by two.

ANNA: Wrong address. It's for another floor.

WILL: Did you see yesterday's? I think the director's doing a good job.

ANNA: It looks great.

WILL: What's Elvis doing here?

ANNA: The cook show? It's all about celebrities' favourite food.

WILL: Dead celebrities' favourite food. Cool. Can you call them and see where the rushes are?

ANNA: Sure.

WILL: Only I wanted to get back to them as soon as I've seen them.

FIN: They'll be great.

WILL sits at his desk and clutches the package.

WILL: Mr. Red. Who has a name like that? I loved that movie.

ELVIS: It's a classic.

WILL: Surely his best yet?

WILL shakes it.

What do you think's inside?

ELVIS stands, considers.

ELVIS: A loaded gun.

WILL: A severed hand.

ELVIS and WILL laugh.

ANNA: Boys. Boys. Boys.

ANNA takes the package off them, eyeing WILL. He looks exhausted. The phone rings again.

Have you even been home to sleep today? Shouldn't you answer that? It might be Kate.

WILL: Yes. Yes. It might be Kate.

The phone rings on. ANNA and FIN look to one another.

WILL ignores it.

ANNA: Will?

WILL: I mean, she was sick a lot this morning. She thought it might be coming. I told her not to worry.

The phone rings on. WILL looks at it, but does not answer. It stops ringing.

ELVIS: My wife swears by fish oil.

ANNA: That's for your brain.

ELVIS: I have brainy kids. Three. Aaron, Lisa Marie and Priscilla.

WILL: I read somewhere there was a Swedish couple just won a case to call their kid Lego. The government wasn't going to let them do it. They also disputed the name Ikea and Metallica and Elvis for a girl.

WILL's phone rings in his pocket again. WILL ignores it.

Everyone looks to one another, WILL reaches in his pocket, takes out his ringing phone, considers. It stops ringing.

You know I actually share a birthday with Elvis.
 ELVIS: Yeah?
 WILL: January 8th.
 ANNA: That's today, Will.
 WILL: It is, isn't it?
 ELVIS: Happy birthday.
 WILL: Happy birthday?
 WILL *smiles, looking at ELVIS.*
 He's here for me?
 ELVIS *steps out, does a marvellous shake of his hips and then launches into a beautiful version of 'Happy Birthday'.*
 ALL: Happy birthday, Will.
 Claps and cheers as ANNA slides the cake down in front of WILL.
 FIN: And I ordered in food from...
 ANNA: ...the one you like. Sashimi, no wasabi or black cod.
 WILL: You did?
 ANNA: You really forgot it's your birthday?
 WILL: No. Well, yes. We've been kind of busy. [*eyeing the cake*]
 'Will... you marry me'? I didn't know you cared, Anna.
 ANNA *smiles, presenting it back to WILL.*
 ANNA: The JT show were doing a live marriage proposal.
 It's meant to say...
 WILL: ...Will.
 WILL *smiles, clearly touched.*
 FIN: I just watched it. Very cute.
 ANNA: Are you OK, Will?
 WILL: Me? I am great. I am great. I mean, we do great work here, don't we? I mean, we are one of the leading television production companies around right now. I mean, we are more than competent. I mean, we've won a lot of awards. I mean, us all, but also me personally, I've won a lot of awards. Yeah?
 All look to one another, then all nod, WILL is acting strangely.
 ALL: Absolutely.
 ELVIS: They look very nice on your wall.
 WILL: Thanks. So, technically, I should be able to do this, shouldn't I? I mean, become a father. I mean, you've done it.
 WILL *looks to ELVIS. ELVIS nods. The phone rings again.*
 ELVIS: Best thing I ever did.
 WILL: Exactly.
 ANNA: You should pick up the phone, Will. Will?
 WILL *silent, eyes closed on the couch.*
 What are you doing?
 WILL: Enjoying my birthday. Enjoying my last few minutes of just me, celebrating my birthday.
 ANNA: It's going to be OK.
 WILL: You think?
 ELVIS: On my birthday, I like to get up, freshen myself up, put on some nice aftershave. Make my breakfast. A favourite of the king's, 'Fool's Gold'. Jar of jam, jar of peanut butter, pound of bacon nicely fried, laid out in a nice baguette. Maybe I take a walk. If the sun's out, lie on the grass a bit. I live alone now but...
 I don't care... I always feel he's with me.
 ANNA: Elvis, right?
 ELVIS: My mother named me Kevin. I hated it. Changed my name by deed poll when I was 18.
 WILL: I'm scared.
 ELVIS: Don't be. It'll all come real natural to you. Pick up the phone, Will.
 WILL: Really?
 FIN: Hey, he's the King.
 WILL *takes in the meeting room of colleagues, friends he's known for years.*

ANNA: You'll be great.
 FIN: Absolutely. Look at the way you run us.
 WILL: I do, don't I?... Yeah... Anna, I'm sorry, could we have that meeting another day?
 ANNA: Sure.
 WILL *nods, hesitates, finally answering his phone.*
 WILL: Hey, sweetheart... Really? OK, I'm on my way... You hang in there. Yes, sweetheart, sounds like it's coming today. [*beat*]
 Thanks... Yeah I just remembered too.
 WILL *puts down the phone.*
 She forgot it was my birthday.
 WILL *looks down at the box, still in his lap, reads the label.*
 I think he's on the next floor.
 ANNA: The studio show. It's on the way. [*to ELVIS*] Would you?
 WILL *holds out the package, ELVIS takes it, making to go.*
 ELVIS: Sure. Hey [*shakes it*] It's all shook up.
 FIN: Ladies and gentlemen, Elvis is leaving the building.
 Whoops and cheers. WILL follows.
 The King is leaving the building.
 More whoops and cheers. WILL turns, smiles, grateful.
 WILL: [*calling after*] And if it's a boy, I'm calling him Elvis.
 ELVIS, *just visible, stands by the lift, the package in his hand.*

Blackout

ACT THREE

3pm, the still calm of a restrained architectural practice. A long, cool, light-filled office gently murmurs with activity and in the foreground a laptop, architectural plans and part of a model occupy an informal meeting area. The package rests upright on the floor. DAVID, mid 40s, an architect, calmly dressed yet clearly nervous, is mid-meeting with EMMA, early/mid 40s, attractive, in understated but deeply beautiful dress and MICHAEL, mid 50s, the firm's head. Light pours in from a window that looks out to a bright courtyard.

DAVID: The sections will rotate slowly through the day, offering our client an ever-changing landscape, a democratic experience for every member of the company. Whatever floor you are on, from ground to penthouse suite, the view is constantly changing, evolving from dawn to dusk.

EMMA: How will you counteract the sway?

DAVID: A central internal frame, strategically sited and wrapped in a glass and aluminum skin.

EMMA: You will have five, maybe ten minutes. He never stays long. You will not get him to listen for long.

DAVID: Ten minutes is all I need.

EMMA: What are the figures?

DAVID: Twenty five million with contingency. Jan is still fine-tuning.

MICHAEL: Thank you, David. You've shown a complete intuition beyond what I expected from the brief. It has absolute integrity.

DAVID *nods, visibly relieved, leaning back in his chair, relaxing a little.*

It's perfect.

MICHAEL *peers at a beautiful model of the building. DAVID is already reaching for the package, about to open it.*

EMMA: And the dome?

DAVID: It was tight but the model-makers managed the prototype. It was here when I got back.

EMMA: OK.

DAVID *nods, hesitates, looking at the package, something not quite right.*

DAVID: Great... Good... Yep...

MICHAEL: Nervous?

DAVID: A little.

MICHAEL: Don't be. He's a great guy.

DAVID: You read so much.

MICHAEL: He's very creative. Powerful and creative. It's a good combination. He's given us a lot to work with and I think you've responded perfectly to the brief. It's going to excite him.

DAVID: You think?

EMMA: He's seeing five pitches in one day.

MICHAEL: Don't let that intimidate us.

EMMA: Still. You could loosen up a little.

DAVID: Loosen up?

EMMA: You have a great smile. You need to smile more. You need to breathe.

DAVID: I do breathe.

MICHAEL: You're doing great.

DAVID: Is there something you need to say, Emma?

EMMA: Let's just go to the model.

DAVID *nods, hesitates, places his hands on the package.*

DAVID: Right.

DAVID *taps his fingers on the table, clearly stalling.*
The label... I thought it said...

MICHAEL *leans over, reads, pulling on his glasses.*

It's not it. It's not the dome. If I don't have the dome... It rests on the top just here. [*pointing to model*] See?

MICHAEL: Red. Mr. Red. Right address. Wrong office. He's right at the top. Ten, fifteen floors.

EMMA: The dome's not here?

DAVID: They said by lunchtime. I came in, saw the box. It was at the reception. Just waiting. I scooped it up and...

EMMA: You presumed?

DAVID: I presumed.

EMMA *stands, heading out, going in search of another package.*

EMMA: This is where you let yourself down.

EMMA *exits, leaving MICHAEL and DAVID alone. MICHAEL reaches for a tall glass of water. He drinks the whole glass, oddly calm, oddly cool.*

DAVID: What's the time?

MICHAEL: Car's coming at ten past.

DAVID *nods. They sit in silence.*

Someone will let us know.

DAVID: I'm really sorry about this, Michael.

MICHAEL *smiles, unfazed. He stands, looking out at the courtyard.*

MICHAEL: These things happen. Technical hitches.

Pause

Do you like fish? I love fish. I love koi carp. My wife is Japanese. You know my wife is Japanese?

DAVID *shakes his head, listening.*

Every year, she buys me one for our anniversary. Currently there are twelve. I've asked her to skip this year. I feel uncomfortable about thirteen. Next year, she will buy two, we will go straight to fourteen. In Japan, thirteen is not an unlucky number. Four is unlucky. It is to do with the pronunciation. Four is pronounced 'shi' which is the same pronunciation as death. Nine is pronounced 'ku' which has the same pronunciation as agony or torture. But my wife is not superstitious. Only me. [*beat*] I love my wife. I want her to be able to buy me lots more koi carp well into our life. But they are expensive, particularly the more rare ones. They go into thousands. A thousand pounds for a fish? Life is too short.

DAVID *smiles, relieved.*

DAVID: Thank you. For being so... understanding. I feel such an idiot. I really appreciate it.

MICHAEL: It was Emma who wanted me to give you this chance at the pitch. I was delighted. I've never really understood why you haven't pushed yourself forward more. Really, David, I think you're one of the most creative architects we've had here. She says you're shy.

DAVID: I guess. I like to think restrained until I feel I have my ideas distilled.

MICHAEL *smiles, easing into DAVID's company.*

MICHAEL: Look... I know... the break-up was a long time ago

but if you didn't know it, I think she thinks of you every minute of everyday. I'd go as far as to say it affects her judgment. Not that I mind. She's the best person I have working here. She's more than a colleague. She's a friend. Over the years, I would say I feel almost paternal towards her. She's bet her next commission on you winning this pitch.

DAVID: Please say that's not true.

EMMA enters, *silently fuming*.

EMMA: It's not here.

DAVID: I could call the couriers.

EMMA: Ten minutes? They'd have something here in ten minutes?

Silence until...

DAVID: Do you like magic?

DAVID goes over, scoops the box off the table and places it on the table in front of him.

EMMA: Please...

DAVID: I loved magic as a kid. The thumb trick?

DAVID wraps his finger around his thumb, pretends to slice it in half.

Always fell for it.

EMMA: You are giving your pitch at four.

DAVID: People love to suspend disbelief.

DAVID pours himself a glass of water, drinking down the whole glass.

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for inviting us to pitch for Expo 2008. I apologise for the delay, but we are here now so... 'We shape our buildings; thereafter they shape us.' Winston Churchill said that.

DAVID places the box down in front of him.

Walk into this building and you are walking into the next twenty years of your life. The place you will begin your working life, the place where you will have your greatest ideas, the place where you will succeed and fail and succeed again, fail and succeed again. The place you may even meet your future wife. More than anything, it should be a place where you want to be.

The box still resting under DAVID's hands.

At the top, a dome of glass that appears to float. It is a place to retreat, to consider, to reflect, to restart. A communal, intimate space away from the network of your working life. It sends a message to the world and to those who work in it. The dome is the spiritual home and centre of this building, the company's soul. Every working day should embrace a moment, to look out, see the bigger picture, to reflect on your life. The moments you got right, the moments you got wrong, the things you'd change, the things you'll do better tomorrow.

MICHAEL claps, a distant colleague already gesturing to him.

MICHAEL: The car's here. It should buy you time until it arrives. Did you call them?

EMMA, clearly moved, nods.

I'll give you five. I've got a good feeling, David.

MICHAEL exits.

DAVID: Does that mean I'm pitching?

EMMA remains silent, scooping up her paperwork.

DAVID: Michael thought...

EMMA stands, infuriated, grabbing together her things, cramming her papers into her bag.

EMMA: You take us through the drawings. I'll pitch thereafter.

DAVID: You offered up your next commission?

EMMA: It was a momentary lapse.

DAVID: You bribed him.

EMMA: Please don't be offended. That is another thing to add to

my list. Takes offence easily.

EMMA makes to go. DAVID stops her, reaching out to stop her, hesitating. EMMA relents, lingers...

DAVID: Michael believes in me.

EMMA: Michael doesn't know you like I do.

DAVID: I think you believe in me too.

DAVID clutches EMMA and gently kisses her, blowing her away. They pull apart, staring at one another, silently shocked yet oddly relieved.

Pause

EMMA: It's going to be way gone four.

DAVID: Four is very unlucky.

EMMA: What are you talking about?

DAVID: It's got the same pronunciation as death. 'Shi' in Japanese.

DAVID smiles.

EMMA: I forgot how weird you were.

EMMA is already gone. Scooping up the box and leaving it by the sideboard, DAVID exits smiling, satisfied that he's already given the presentation of his life.

Blackout

ACT FOUR

9pm, the penthouse office of an international property company. It is a beautiful, generous space: contemporary, calm and cool. An art installation illuminates an Eames Lounge Chair, and a glittering skyline is seen through a sweeping panoramic, floor to ceiling window.
BOBBY, *late 50s/early 60s, enters the room, sliding a mop back and forth.*

MR. RED: Bobby...

A little startled, BOBBY looks up, MR. RED, mid 70s, immaculately dressed in a bespoke dark suit and white shirt, stands up from his lounge chair. He is CEO and founder of the company.

BOBBY: Hey, Mr. Red. Mind you don't slip.

MR. RED: Bobby, you want a drink?

BOBBY: Got two more floors.

MR. RED: Just a drink.

BOBBY: Doesn't agree with me, Mr. Red.

MR. RED: This will.

MR. RED takes a bottle of wine sitting on his desk, opens it, pours a tasting glass and holds it out to BOBBY. BOBBY takes it, smells, shrugs, handing it back to him. MR. RED pours two full glasses and holds one out to BOBBY.

Do you know how many years I've been working here?

BOBBY hesitates, puts down his mop, wiping his hands. He takes a glass. They chink. BOBBY drinks. MR. RED drinks, looking to BOBBY in anticipation. BOBBY takes it, puts it down, and resumes mopping.

Forty years. [*he raises his glass*]

BOBBY: You should put in for a raise.

MR. RED laughs, considers BOBBY, mopping the floor.

MR. RED: Give me the mop.

BOBBY: You sure you can handle it?

MR. RED: I'll try not to fall.

BOBBY holds out his mop, MR. RED takes it.

BOBBY: You got to get it the right side of wet. It's too dry.

It's skidding. It should glide.

MR. RED dips the mop in the bucket, with the skill of a novice, and then mops the floor, gliding it back and forth, looking to BOBBY for his approval.

You missed a bit.

MR. RED smiles, resuming mopping, BOBBY already moving onto polishing MR. RED's desk.

MR. RED: In 1985, Christie's sold a bottle of Bordeaux for 160,000 dollars. A 1787 Château Lafite. Etched in the bottle were the initials Th. J. Thomas Jefferson, he was an avid oenophile.

BOBBY: Even if I did know what that means, I couldn't spell it.

MR. RED: A wine aficionado. He was an ambassador to France, sent to breed political alliance with Europe and to buy up as much of their wine as he could. A 1787 Château d'Yquem sold for 56,588 dollars a few years ago now. Of course, not any of these wines were drinkable, but that wasn't the point.

BOBBY: 160,000 dollars on vinegar?

MR. RED: These wines are like old stamps.

BOBBY scoops up his glass of wine, considers, holding it up to the light.

BOBBY: I thought it tasted funny.

MR. RED: In 1989, William Sokolin, a New York wine merchant, had a bottle of Château Margaux 1787, also with Jefferson's initials on consignment to its English owner. He was asking 500,000 dollars for it but had had no cash bids when he took it along to a Château Margaux dinner at the Four Seasons restaurant. At the end of the evening, Sokolin still had no takers so he got ready to leave when a waiter carrying a tray knocked into him, smashing the bottle on the floor.

BOBBY: Wow!

Pause

Did he get the sack?

MR. RED laughs, swinging the mop, soapy water, splashing his shoes.

Careful. You'll mess up your shoes.

MR. RED: It's harder than it looks.

BOBBY smiles, takes the mop, resumes mopping.

BOBBY: I can do it in my sleep.

MR. RED stares out at the glittering skyline.

MR. RED: The thing—and this is the thing—is you can't take it with you.

BOBBY: No, you can't.

MR. RED: Forty years, Bobby? You like it?

BOBBY laughs, puts down his mop and drinks his wine.

BOBBY: It's growing on me. [*Pause*] That's a beautiful boat, Mr. Red.

MR. RED follows BOBBY's gaze, a model yacht, resting on a side table.

MR. RED: A beautiful boat that's shown me beautiful places.

I have a beautiful office and five beautiful houses on four beautiful continents. I have a vineyard in Bardi and a second in Fairmont. I have one of the best art collections this side of the Atlantic. I have good friends. [*looks at BOBBY*] Great friends. [*beat*] So, what's the next challenge? I mean what do I do now, Bobby?

BOBBY: You're asking me?

MR. RED: We talk nearly every night. You're the best person I know.

BOBBY laughs, clearly tickled.

BOBBY: Let me see... First, you go round the world on that boat.

Caribbean. South Pacific. Cayman Islands. You take it slow.

You float. You relax.

MR. RED: I don't really like the sun.

BOBBY: Then, when you've finished your cruising, you take that plane you use...

MR. RED: I'm trying to limit my carbon footprint here.

BOBBY: OK, so you crush it into a small metal cube like that other stuff you call art and you place it as a monument outside this building here. And you buy a bicycle [*points out the route on the Globe*] and you ride from here to there, all the way along the river. You ever done that?

MR. RED: No. You?

BOBBY: I don't have a bike. But I hear... I hear it's what people do when they retire.

MR. RED: Please don't use that word in front of me.

BOBBY: [*laughing*] Retire. You walk, you stop, and you listen. It's what you've always done.

MR. RED: Hmm. Christopher won't be happy.

BOBBY: Christopher is done with being your driver. Ditch the limo. In fact, take him too. Get him out of his suit. Then you go home to your wife and you kiss her and you hold her in

your arms and you say, 'Sweetheart, we did it. Forty years and a whole heap of money in the bank and we did it.'

BOBBY *sips his wine, swirling it in his mouth, considering.*

What did you say this is called again?

MR. RED: 1964 Château Latour.

BOBBY: Latour? I'll remember that.

MR. RED *sinks down into a long recliner, looking out.* BOBBY *cleans around him.*

MR. RED: For God's sake, Bobby. Will you please sit down? You know forty years you've come to this office and I've never seen you sit. Can you even bend your legs?

BOBBY: Touch my toes. Do a forward roll.

MR. RED: Really?

BOBBY *puts down his mop, rising to the challenge. He stands, feet together, on the edge of a deep pile rug, and suddenly does a perfect forward roll, brushing himself down as he gets to his feet.*

Not bad.

MR. RED *claps then pats the seat of the chair next to him.*

BOBBY *concedes, pulling up a chair, sitting down with MR. RED, both looking out at the glittering skyline.*

So, what would you do? If it was you?

BOBBY: Me? I'd listen to my Hendrix LPs. Do the garden a little. Spend some time with my kids. Kiss my wife. Sit in the sun. Have some fun.

Pause

MR. RED: It scares me. I'm scared, Bobby.

BOBBY: No need to be scared of fun, Mr. Red. Fun is easy. You just put your toes together and you roll.

MR. RED: Go on, try it. Just for once. Just try it. Try my name.

It's embarrassing. It's insulting to me, quite frankly. I use yours.

BOBBY *considers, smoothing down the edge of the chair, spotting a smear, brushing a duster over it.*

BOBBY: You just do it. It might feel a bit stiff at first but then it comes back to you. You do it enough and it gets easy. You feel free.

MR. RED: Is that what it is?

BOBBY *shrugs, pulling himself up, resuming cleaning.*

BOBBY: We're a long time sleeping, Mr. Red.

MR. RED *considers, finishing off the last of his wine. He stands, walks over to the rug, putting his feet together.*

Remember, tuck in your head.

MR. RED *crouches, tucking his head in, he hesitates and then...*

MR. RED: If my back goes tomorrow, I'm suing you.

BOBBY: If you're suing me, I'm going to say I tried to stop him but he was having none of it.

He rolls across the carpet, inelegant but definitely a forward roll.

BOBBY *laughs, offering him appreciative applause.*

BOBBY: Not bad.

MR. RED: Yeah, that was better than it looked.

Pause

BOBBY: Hey, I got something for you.

BOBBY *heads off along the corridor, leaving MR. RED. Going over to the drinks cabinet, MR. RED tops up his glass, looking at a photo, scooping it up.*

MR. RED: The thing is, you never really get that, even though you might still feel a kid, there's a grown man staring back at you. When it seems like only yesterday...

MR. RED *looks about him, mellow and a little hazy from the wine.*

I can go to the Caribbean. I can go round the world. It's nice but I don't think it's a place. It's a time. You think if you stop, you get to feel the way you used to feel. Yeah, it's a time... I'm

about nine. I'm with my grandfather. He's taken me fishing to one of those rivers where you have to walk through a wood first. You know those woods, just endless long tall tree trunks, stretching ahead of you, scissoring the view. You can't see anything but the trees. And it's so quiet, all I can hear is a crack of a branch under my feet and my grandpa humming and me with my rod and my jar of bait. There's a blackbird singing... You ever listened to a blackbird sing?

MR. RED *whistles to himself, mimicking its call.*

So beautiful, it makes you feel nine again.

BOBBY, *steady on the approach, carries the large square package.*

He hands it to MR. RED.

You think you can ever feel nine again? You think that's where I'm going? Eh, Bobby?

BOBBY: Found it on the fourth floor. It was left by the bins. It has your name on it.

MR. RED: Thank you.

BOBBY *shrugs, resuming cleaning up, scooping up a trash can, and turning to go.*

For everything. For the last forty years, Bobby.

BOBBY: You're welcome... Henry.

BOBBY *heads off, wheeling a cleaning trolley along the wide corridor ahead.*

MR. RED *hesitates, looking down at the package. He listens, pressing an ear to the box, hearing something. Sliding it down on the table in front of him, MR. RED peels off the tape, opening it. He gasps a little in surprise then, reaching a hand into the box, he pulls a blackbird, perched on his finger, staring back at him. Suddenly the blackbird opens his mouth and sings until...*

[calling out] Night.

The blackbird throws back its wings, flying out of MR. RED's hands, swooping around the room once. MR. RED watches captivated, watching as it swoops along the corridor, disappearing.

MR. RED: [calling back] Night, Bobby.

The distant hum of electricity, the lights flicking off, almost taking their cue from BOBBY, just visible wheeling his trolley, disappearing along the endless corridor.

MR. RED *sinks down into his reclining chair, visibly moved, laughing to himself. Outside the city glitters, MR. RED sips his wine, considering, a quiet decision made.*

Blackout

The End