

Theories about Pain

By

Daniel Hunt

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INT. VIC'S FLAT, EAST LONDON

Vic Holden's body slumps in an armchair in a small, cramped and dark living room. His body looks contorted and uncomfortable. Vic is a twenty nine year old unemployed alcoholic, he lives alone in his flat. He appears to have a strong physique, stocky and solid. His arms and neck are scarred from burns and appear to go further under his shirt. He rubs his tired lifeless eyes and reaches his arm out to a side table cluttered with rubbish and the past month's copies of The Sun and grabs a large bottle of whiskey and pours a generous helping into a dirty glass. Slowly he pulls the glass closer to his mouth and purses his lips. He pauses just as the glass rests on his lower lip. Vic appears to be remembering something but it is unclear what as he holds a blank and vacant expression. Loud noises caused by teenagers outside breaks Vic's pause and he shrugs off his deep thoughts and takes a large gulp of whiskey.

EXT. COUNCIL FLATS, EAST LONDON

Vic's flat is part of a group of council estate tower blocks all situated around a courtyard in the middle. It is winter and the coldness in the air infuses with the monstrous grey towers creating a mood of uneasiness and depression across the estate. The loud noises that broke Vic's concentration are coming from the centre of the courtyard. About half a dozen youths boys and girls are surrounding a young girl.

YOUTH A

You stupid bitch.

YOUTH B

I saw you give us that glare. You think you better than us and that.

The girl wearing a school uniform in the centre remains huddled trying to protect herself. She is being kicked, punched and spat on. She clings to her bag.

YOUTH A

Who the fuck are to look at us like that. Who are you? You ain't shit are ya?

YOUTH C

Thought you would stop giving us those evils after the last time we beat you. You jus don't get it do ya?

YOUTH A

Me and the boys should beat you down for that. You don't come around here where we run the patch and give us those looks. Don't you know who we are. We run this. Who are you?

The girl whimpers and cries but takes the beating as if almost accustomed to the activity.

YOUTH B

You ain't too smart are you? With all your books and shit, you still ain't figured out you gotta give respect to us round here.

YOUTH A

If you do it again then next time I will set my bitches on you. I go easy on you cos you are a girl and all but next time they will be rah! All up on you. You get me.

OLD WOMAN

Hey! Shut up down there or I am calling the Police. I have had enough of your shit you little fuckers. Every night you are out here making a racket.

The old woman shouts from half way up a tower block from the balcony outside her door. She mumbles to herself as she dials the police on a cordless phone.

YOUTH A

We're gone. Maybe you will learn from now on. You only make it worse for yourself with your lack of respect.

The teenagers disband rapidly and the girl begins to pull herself up. She is a fourteen year old called Ashley Gaines. She has a petite frame and short hair. She wipes the tears from her face with her sleeve and starts to breath more deeply and regain her concentration.

ASHLEY

(sarcastically)

Cheers. Always a pleasure.

She begins to dust herself down and quickly places her attention on to the bag that she was clinging to. She opens the bag and pulls out a book and checks that it is still intact.

ASHLEY
(with joy)
Thank God.

Ashley then slides to book back into her bag and adjusts her jacket and shoes and begins to walk towards one of the tower blocks.

INT. VIC'S FLAT, EAST LONDON

Vic stands at his window behind the dusty net curtains looking out on to the courtyard. He takes another large gulp of whiskey from his glass and watches Ashley as she walks across the courtyard.

INT. ASHLEY'S FLAT

Ashley steps into the hallway of her family home. She takes off her coat and hangs it on a peg close to the door. The hallway is decorated with family photos and portraits. Photos show Ashley in the centre between her mother Karen and father Tom. A kettle can be heard boiling in the kitchen and the noise from a television is heard from the living room. Ashley walks into the bathroom and begins to wash her face and tend to the cut lip she received from the beating. She wipes away the dirt on her face and neck with a flannel. Reaching into the medicine cabinet over the sink she grabs an antiseptic wipe and wipes the the thin cut above her eyebrow.

ASHLEY
(in pain)
Tish! Argh! Bloody stings.

She continues to tend to her wounds. In the background her parents can be heard shouting at one another. The shouting is muffled as it travels through the walls.

TOM
Jesus Christ woman! What did I bloody tell you. You knew full bloody well that I wanted to watch that programme, you never bloody listen do you...

KAREN

Don't you dare talk to me like that
I ain't summit you scraped off your
shoe. I was only saying...

TOM

I don't care what you were saying.
I was telling you that you fucked
up. Again. How hard is it to set
the fucking timer on this thing. I
should have done it myself you
stupid cow.

KAREN

That would be nice if you did
something yourself. What am I?
You're fucking skivvy! Wash, cook,
clean. That's all I ever bloody do
and what thanks do I get. You
arrogant arse.

TOM

Do not give me that tone woman. You
need to show me some respect. I ask
only what is expected of you as my
wife. I don't spend all day at work
grafting to come home to this shit.

KAREN

Oh shut up and get off your lazy
arse.

TOM

What did you say? Don't you fucking
dare talk to me like that woman.
You stupid.

Ashley is staring into the mirror as her parents exchange
insults. She towels off the excess water on her hands and
heads out of the bathroom.

INT. ASHLEY'S LIVING ROOM

TOM

All day I work myself into the
ground and for what? To come home
to a miserable woman who can't even
work out the complexities of a
video recorder.

KAREN

Well if you would stop being a tight arse maybe you could invest in a DVD recorder that might actually work.

TOM

There is nothing wrong with that video recorder. The problem is the Muppet working the thing.

KAREN

(swelling with anger)
You ignorant...

Ashley enters the living room and stands at the door. Tom is sat down at his armchair opposite the television and Karen is stood to the side of the television.

ASHLEY

Hi. Bye.

Ashley begins to walk away.

KAREN

Oh, um hello Ashley darling, um. You're back late, good day at school?

ASHLEY

Um, yeah it was great. I am going to my bedroom.

TOM

What you not even going to say hello to your old man. I raised you with more manners than that. Your taking bloody liberties lately. You have no respect or manners at all do you?

ASHLEY

Hi dad, bye dad.

Ashley begins to turn away.

TOM

You do not turn your back on me. I am your fucking father and you will show me some respect. It's bad enough I have to put up with it from your mother but I won't put up with it from you either. I am fed

(MORE)

TOM (cont'd)
up of being treated like shit. Is
that what I am to this family? A
piece of shit.

KAREN
Easy Tom, she hasn't...

TOM
Hush woman, I am speaking to my
daughter not you. No one ever
fucking listens to me do they. It's
in one and ear and out with the
other with you, both of you. Now
you are going to listen to what I
have to say and you will bloody
listen this time. You hear me? Now
Ashley come here.

Tom signals Ashley to come over by waving his finger at her. Ashley tentatively steps forward towards him. Tom points down at the floor suggesting that Ashley should kneel next to him. She does and he forcefully takes his hand and grabs Ashley across the face holding her jaw tightly.

TOM
Now you will fucking listen to me
little girl. I will not tolerate
this shit from you. Do you
understand?

ASHLEY
(mumbling)
Uh huh.

KAREN
Stop it Tom, you're hurting her.

TOM
Shut it woman. I am disciplining
our child here. Maybe you should
take some notes or summit. Maybe it
wouldn't be like this if you tried
a little harder.

Karen heads towards Ashley's aid and Tom releases his grip and stands up to confront Karen. He grabs her wrist as she swings for him. He holds her wrist until she relents her struggling.

TOM
Ashley. Go to your room. Now!

Ashley picks herself up quickly and heads out to hallway picking up her bag and heading towards her bedroom.

TOM

You never fucking listen woman do you?

INT. ASHLEY'S BEDROOM

Ashley grabs her bag from the hallway and then rushes in through her bedroom door and quickly slams it shut. She reaches for the two deadbolts at the top and bottom of the door and firmly locks them in place. She then turns and leans her back into the door with a sense of relief. She inhales some air to calm herself and wipes a tear with the sleeve of her jumper. She pulls herself up relaxed and calmed but still shaking gently with unease.

ASHLEY

Prick.

She reaches into her bag and pulls out a book. It is a travel book, a guide to France stating what sites are on offer and how to see them. Ashley takes the book over to her bed where she switches on a table lamp beside the bed. She lies on her stomach and begins to read. As she reads she gently plays with a beaded bracelet on her arm.

ASHLEY

One day.

Ashley continues to read until she slowly falls asleep.

INT. VIC'S FLAT, EAST LONDON

Vic lies in his dirty bed asleep. He moves violently as he sleeps. He is having a re-occurring nightmare that has haunted him for a long time. Images of blazing fires and anarchy blur through his mind. Screams can be heard in the background. Vic abruptly wakes up in a sweat, his eyes are wide open and he appears vulnerable.

VIC

(disjointed)

Ugh...fucking thing. Where, where.
Ugh.

Vic looks around his bed unsure of his surroundings. he then finds a point of focus in the shape of a bottle and reaches toward it.

VIC
 Argh. I see you now. OK.

Vic grabs the bottle but its contents are empty.

VIC
 (upset)
 Dammit. Why are you like that. All
 dry. Hmm.

Vic manages to get himself up and out of bed. He walks through the dark flat to the living room. He stumbles on cluttered rubbish that has been left on the floor. Empty bottles can be heard chiming beneath his feet. He grabs a half full bottle of whiskey that is on the side table by his armchair.

VIC
 There you are. I was beginning to worry about you. Thought you might have left me or something. Ha. You know I need you on nights like this. Especially with a draft coming in. Brggh, chilly.

Vic holds the bottle and gently caresses his hand over the body of the bottle. He sits down in his armchair and takes a two large gulps straight from the bottle's neck.

VIC
 (happier)
 That's better.

Vic continues to drink in the dark until he drinks himself to sleep. The now empty bottle slips out of his grip and joins the rubbish on the floor.

INT. VIC'S FLAT, EAST LONDON

Daylight breaks. Vic is still slumped in his armchair. An alarm is heard ringing. Its sound is muffled as it lies under rubbish on the floor. Vic begins to wake.

VIC
 What the? What time? Where did I put that stupid thing? I know it's here somewhere.

Vic ruffles through the junk on the floor to find the alarm and cease it's beeping. He throws it back on the floor when he is done and slumps back in his chair and turns his head to calendar hanging on the wall. It is a Tuesday, it is dole day. All the dole days are highlighted on the calendar.

VIC

Ah. So it is.

Vic slowly gets out of the chair and begins to root around the flat to find a pair of jeans and a jumper. He finds what he is looking for next to an overflowing wash basket filled with dirty laundry. He puts these on and heads to the bathroom where he quickly splashes his face with water, mainly to wake him up than actually clean him. He then looks in to the grimy mirror and examines himself. Vic disapproves of what he sees.

VIC

I don't want this argument today. I have things to do, people to see. Very busy. Very busy. I can't stay around here chatting with you all day. It's very cold outside and I need to find my jacket. Do you know where I put it? No of cause you don't, you never know where anything is do you. Anyway I can't keep talking, like I said I have things to do and people to see. Very busy.

Vic continues to search through his flat until he finds his jacket tucked behind his bedroom door. He puts on the jacket and heads out of his front door ready to collect his dole money from the job centre.

EXT. COUNCIL FLATS, EAST LONDON

Vic walks out from his flat and takes the walk down the stairs towards the courtyard. Ashley is also making her way through the courtyard as he is on her way t school. She walks hurriedly as she is still sorting out the contents of her bag as she walks. Vic remembers her from the previous night. He stops by the stairwell and looks out to her observing her as she walks. Ashley quickly stops to sort out the problem with her overfilled bag. She places the bag on the floor and rearranges it. As she looks up again she is aware that Vic is watching her. Their eyes lock and they remain focused on each others gaze for a second. Slightly phased by the stare Ashley breaks it and rushes off on her journey to school. Vic remains stood still and feels a sense of recognition in the look that he shared with the young girl. A point of human contact he shuns away from but also longs to feel. After few seconds Vic carries of with his mission to the the job centre.

INT. JOB CENTRE

Vic is sitting at a desk belonging to Mr. Khan, a member of the job centre team trying to get the unemployed back into work.

MR KHAN

So Vincent how are you today?

VIC

So, so. I prefer Vic remember.

MR KHAN

Excellent Vincent. Well have you been out for any interviews this week? There was that vacancy at the printing factory. That sounded like fun didn't it. There was also the role of assistant caretaker at St. Christopher's Primary school. Actually maybe that one wouldn't be quite suited to you but there is plenty of work out there if you look for it. You know how the system works by know Vincent. It's not all Polish as the media would have you to think it Vincent. So did you find anything?

VIC

Nothing I fancied really.

MR KHAN

Its not a case of what you fancy Mr Holden. You are obliged to fulfil certain criteria if you wish to remain receiving your benefit. Plus if you actually take up a permanent position of employment you will be considerably more financially sound. A regular income will benefit you so profusely Vincent. It will give you the freedom to do whatever you desire. New home, new car. Do you not wish to improve your income and state of living? A man of your skills...

VIC

(cutting in angrily)

A man of my skills is not good for anything. I will go to that

(MORE)

VIC (cont'd)
interview for the cleaning job on
Friday so I will turn that down and
receive my dole check for the next
week. Anything else?

MR KHAN
No. I think that will be enough for
today. I do not feel I am able to
cope with your behaviour any more
Vincent. I am disheartened by your
lack of drive and enthusiasm. I am
unsure of whether I will be able to
assist you any more in your quest
for employment.

VIC
Uh huh.

MR KHAN
I look forward to seeing you
next week Vincent.

INT. OFF LICENSE

Vic walks towards the shelf holding the whiskey and grabs
three bottles of the cheapest variety and places them into a
basket. He also picks up a four pack of lager and a packet
of pork scratchings for the journey home. He approaches the
shop owner to pay for the items.

SHOP OWNER
The usual then?

VIC
Uh huh.

SHOP OWNER
Anything else you fancy? We have
this new Polish vodka in. Had to
keep up with demand. You know what
is like round here these days. When
I come over here from India I had
respect for the British culture.
These guys think they can do
whatever they want.

VIC
Just this please.

Vic hands over exactly the right amount before it is even totalled. The shop owner carries on talking and putting the money away in the till as Vic is ignoring him and walking out.

SHOP OWNER

We never used to have any of this trouble. This nation was built on respect. You understand me don't you?

The shop owner looks up to the front of his till.

SHOP OWNER

I mean. Huh? Where did he go?

INT. VIC'S FLAT, EAST LONDON

Vic comes through the front door of his flat discarded two empty lager cans on the floor. He drags through his bag from the off license and is also carrying an Iceland bag. He takes these into the kitchen. He empties the contents of the Iceland bag and puts them away. Six one pound ready meals go into the freezer and a pint of milk goes into the mould covered fridge. He puts his bag of alcohol next to his armchair and sits down opening a can of lager.

VIC

She was a nice girl I met today. Very nice. Very pretty, not in a sexual way, no. A nice way, not like all those other kids you see out there. You know the ones I mean. Yeah, the annoying ones. Very nice.

EXT. COUNCIL FLATS, EAST LONDON

The next day Vic stands by the stairwell on the courtyard at the same time he did the previous day. He waits anxiously for the young girl to appear.

VIC

Where are you?

He continues to wait and eventually Ashley comes out in the same rushing routine on her way to school. Vic begins to talk quietly to himself.

VIC
 (to himself)
 Hi. How are you? Really? Oh that's great. I am Vic by the way and you are?

Ashley walks past and quickly notices that the man is standing there but ignores it as she heads for school.

VIC
 (to himself)
 Oh you gotta get to school. Yeah I see, that's cool. I will catch you tomorrow maybe if I ain't too busy.

EXT. COUNCIL FLATS, EAST LONDON

The next day Vic stands and watches as Ashley walks by again.

VIC
 (to himself)
 I know it was cold last night. I couldn't sleep well at all. It doesn't help with the hectic lifestyle I lead. What do I do? Well. Well, I am... Oh you gotta get off again. OK, same time tomorrow. Cool, yeah.

EXT. COUNCIL FLATS, EAST LONDON

The next day Vic stands and watches as Ashley walks through the courtyard.

VIC
 (to himself)
 That was quite funny wasn't it. I was thinking how does he do something like that. I saw it on the news but I didn't believe it. What did you think? Yeah I know what you mean. There are some really strange people out there. So I will see you tomorrow? Oh, of course it's the weekend. Well I had made plans to go away for the weekend, you know chill out and relax. A friend of mine has a lodge in the lake district. It's very nice. I can go fishing and...you

(MORE)

VIC (cont'd)
like fishing? No way, girls don't
like fishing. Really? Well I caught
one this big.

Vic pulls out his hands and gestures the size of a fish.

VIC
(to himself)
Beat that. Well I better let you
get on. I have to pack. I might see
you on Monday if I am back on time.
OK, see you later.

Vic watches the young girl as she is unaware she is being watched. Over the next week Vic carries on this routine of imaginary conversations with Ashley. It is a part of his day that he looks forward to and suppresses his feelings of pain. One morning Ashley does not show up in the courtyard. Vic waits tentatively by the stairs longing for her appearance.

VIC
Where are you? You never told
me you were busy today. If I
had known I would not have
come. I am very busy. I have
things to do and people to
see. I thought you would let
me know if weren't able to
make it. I thought we spoke
about this. I don't like being
messed around, not when there
is so much for me to do.

Vic is becoming increasingly frustrated and storms off back up the stairs and into his flat. Slamming the door behind him as he enters.

INT. VIC'S FLAT, EAST LONDON

Vic goes into the bathroom and goes to the mirror. He runs the tap in the sink and dowses his face with cold water. He lifts his head and stares into his face.

VIC
Where was she? She never said that
she would not make it. It's just
disappointing, you know what I
mean? Exactly, we built up a rap
pour. I thought we were getting
along. Why does this always happen
to me. Don't look at me like that.

Vic points at himself in the mirror.

VIC

I know what your thinking and it isn't my fault. I didn't get my hopes up. No! I didn't. I know you said it would not work but this was different, we had a connection. I saw in her eyes what I see in mine. You saw it to, I know you did.

Vic walks away from the mirror with his face still dripping wet. He goes back to his armchair and starts to pour himself a drink.

VIC

I will see you later.

Vic finishes off the contents of one and a half whiskey bottles. Eventually morning passes to afternoon and the afternoon passes to evening in a drunken haze. Vic remains slumped in the armchair. Small beams of street lights shine into Vic's dark living room. Vic is in his nightmares again, while asleep he scratches wildly at the scars on his arms and neck, panic stricken he wakes up from a drunken slumber, grabs a bottle and heads towards his window overlooking the courtyard. With blurred vision he makes out a commotion in the courtyard.

EXT. COUNCIL FLATS, EAST LONDON

Ashley is being dragged across the courtyard by her father Tom. Ashley is being pulled violently by her arms and shoulder.

TOM

You stupid little bitch. What time do you think this is? What the fuck were you doing out this late? There are all sorts of fuckers out there that will hurt you. God knows what they would do to you.

ASHLEY

(in pain)

Dad! You're hurting me. I was only at the library. You know I go there when its open late. Argh!

TOM

Not this fucking late. We have an agreement. You are home when I say

(MORE)

TOM (cont'd)
 you have to be home. I am not a
 pushover like your mother. I will
 not have you acting like a madam
 while I am around.

ASHLEY
 Dad. You are really hurting me now,
 stop it please.

TOM
 Shut it!

INT. VIC'S FLAT, EAST LONDON

Vic makes out what he believes to be the young girl he has
 been watching and rushes out of the flat to investigate
 dropping a bottle on the floor as he hurriedly leaves.

EXT. COUNCIL FLATS, EAST LONDON

Tom is still dragging Ashley and they have reached the
 centre of the courtyard.

TOM
 Stop fucking about and hurry up.

ASHLEY
 You can't do this to me dad. It
 hurts. You can't...

TOM
 I am your fucking father. I can do
 whatever the fuck I want while you
 are in my care. It's for your own
 good.

Vic is fuelled with anger and rushes over to the aid of the
 young girl in peril. He runs towards Tom and grabs hi
 throwing him off his grip of Ashley.

TOM
 What the? What do you think you are
 doing you prick.

Vic is silent and ignores what Tom is saying. Ashley is on
 her knees gathering back her breath.

TOM
 Fuck off son. She's my daughter, I
 ain't doing her no harm so just
 give it a rest mate and do one.

Tom grabs Ashley again and begins to pull her away.

ASHLEY

Stop it!

Vic grabs Tom again and throws him to the ground. Vic superiorly is able to overpower Tom.

TOM

That's it you dick I have had
enough. Now do one before I fuck
you over.

Vic punches Tom as he tries to get back up. Vic is now over the top of Tom's body. Vic's hands form a tight grip around Tom's neck. Vic is seething with rage and begins to strangle Tom. Silently Ashley looks on stunned by what she is witnessing.

TOM

Ugh! You..fuck. I..kill.

Vic does not loosen his grip around Tom's neck. Tom gasps for air until eventually he no longer has the the strength and chokes under Vic's force. Vic loosens his grip and Tom's lifeless skull falls back cracking against the cold grey pavement. Vic turns and looks at the young girl beside him. Ashley remains stunned and silenced but not upset by the death of her father. The pair hold their gaze and then Vic begins to pick up Tom's lifeless body. Vic drags the body to the bin lock up below the flats. He quietly opens the lid of a large Biffa bin and throws the body into the stinking waste. Ashley begins to help, rearranging rubbish to cover up the body. The pair remain in silence. Vic escorts her back to her flat. Ashley stops at the door and turns around.

ASHLEY

(quietly)

Thank you.

EXT. COUNCIL FLATS, EAST LONDON

Vic stands in the courtyard the next day going back to the same routine of waiting for Ashley. Ashley emerges and as she walks she spots Vic she gives a faint smile and carries on walking. This event repeats itself the next day as well.

INT. ASHLEY'S FLAT

Ashley's mum Karen is on the phone to the police.

KAREN

(frustrated)

I have told you I do not know where he is? That's why I am calling you. What are you going to do about it. It's not like Tom to disappear like that. None of his clothes are gone or anything. He hasn't been to work, he's not down the pub. You will? Thank you. I just need to know.

INT. VIC'S FLAT, EAST LONDON

Vic stands at his window looking out as police are in the area knocking on doors trying to gather information. While police are going from door to door Vic anxiously watches as the waste truck arrives to pick up the rubbish. Nervously Vic looks on as the waste truck leaves and the police come closer to his door. His door knocks and Vic nervously opens the door to two officers.

POLICE OFFICER A

Afternoon sir we are going door to door to find information in relation to the disappearance of Thomas Gaines. He lives in the building opposite to you.

The officer eyes Vic up and down and notices the state of the flat behind him. The officer looks around curiously.

POLICE OFFICER A

Do you mind if we step in sir?

VIC

(nervously)

No, sure. Come in.

Vic leads the officers through to the living room.

VIC

Excuse the mess. I have been really busy lately. Bit rushed off my feet.

The officers look disapprovingly around their surroundings.

POLICE OFFICER A
It's quite all right sir. believe
it or not we have seen worse. So
your name is sir?

VIC
Vic Holden, Vincent Holden.

POLICE OFFICER A
Vincent Holden and were you at home
on the evening of the fifteenth of
November?

VIC
Yes I was. I don't tend to get out
much in the evening any more.

POLICE OFFICER A
Do you know Thomas Gaines at all
sir?

VIC
Can't say I do sorry. I don't
really know anyone round here
really. Everyone keeps to their own
little worlds I think.

POLICE OFFICER A
So you didn't notice anything
strange or out the ordinary that
night sir? Anything could be of
some use to us.

VIC
Nothing seems to jump out at me
officer. I am sorry. Once I am home
and in this armchair I switch off.

POLICE OFFICER A
OK sir, well thank you for your
help. I will leave this card with
you and if you think you have any
information that might be of use to
us do not hesitate to contact.
Thanks again.

Vic takes the card from the officer and then escorts them to
the door.

VIC
Will do, cheers.

Vic closes the door and falls into a heap at the bottom the door. Frightened he clutches the card and rips it up. Panic stricken he rifles around the flat looking for alcohol. He finds a bottle buried under some dirty laundry and quickly gulps down a large quantity.

VIC

What have you done? You stupid
dicks?

Slapping his head with frustration he drinks the rest of the bottle and falls asleep on the hallway floor.

Loud knocking is made at Vic's front door. The knocking wakes up Vic and he panics.

VIC

(nervously)
Who is it?

There is no response.

VIC

Is that you officer? I told you
earlier that I did not know
anything. I told you when I get in
that chair I switch off. I switch
off, you remember?

Still no response. Vic creeps closer to the door and slowly begins to open it.

VIC

I suppose its just routine isn't
it? Checking up and all that. Got
to be done. Paperwork to be filled
in. That bloody paperwork, that has
to be a pain in the arse. Excuse my
French officer.

Vic pulls open the door to find Ashley standing in the doorway. She is clutching a small rucksack. Vic looks at her stunned and Ashley appears frightened.

VIC

Hey.

ASHLEY

Hey.

VIC

What are you doing here?

ASHLEY
Can I come in please?

Vic is wary and unsure of what to do.

VIC
Um. OK, sure.

ASHLEY
Thank you.

Ashley walks into the flat and heads towards the living room. Vic follows behind her. Ashley stands up by the window overlooking the area below.

ASHLEY
Do you want to know my name?

VIC
Your name?

ASHLEY
You don't know it do you?

VIC
No. I don't think I caught it.

ASHLEY
My name is Ashley.

VIC
Hi Ashley, nice to meet you.

ASHLEY
And you?

VIC
And what about me?

ASHLEY
Your name?

VIC
Oh right. Yeah. It's Vic.

ASHLEY
Vic huh. Well...

Ashley begins to break down into tears. Vic looks on unaware how to deal with her.

VIC

Now c'mon. Don't be like that
around me I don't know what to do.

ASHLEY

(crying)

You. You saved me from him. You
made that pain go away.

VIC

I didn't mean to kill him, I just
got so angry I could not stop.

ASHLEY

I am glad you did. I don't hate you
for what you have done. I am
grateful for it. But I don't know
what to do? How can I look at my
mum and not tell her what I know? I
want to tell her that we are free
now. We don't have to take his shit
any more. We can have our own
lives.

VIC

I don't know what you expect me to
do.

ASHLEY

I know that you were watching me. I
noticed after a couple of days that
it was more than coincidence.

VIC

No. I wasn't following you or
anything. I don't really know what
you mean by that.

ASHLEY

I saw you. I saw that look that you
gave me. I wasn't scared by you. I
understood you I suppose.

VIC

You did?

ASHLEY

Yeah. It was like when you looked
at me I saw the same look of fear.
I can't explain it. I just
understood it. That's why I am
here.

VIC
What's why?

ASHLEY
I want to know more about you. I want to know why you did what you did. There has to be a reason for it.

VIC
I don't know if I can tell you what you want to hear. I did what I did. You were in trouble and I wanted to protect you. That's all.

Ashley begins to cry even more.

ASHLEY
I want to escape this place. I need to get out of here. I know you are like me. I know you want to escape to. I need you and you need me.

VIC
Stop crying. I can't give you what you want.

ASHLEY
Why?

VIC
I can't. I am not the person you think I am. I am not a good person. I am too busy for this. I am far too busy.

ASHLEY
(crying)
Please.

VIC
Ashley, don't force me to make promises I can't keep.

Ashley continues to cry and sob into the sleeves of her jacket. Vic goes over to her and pulls her up. He looks into her eyes. Ashley cries louder and more emotionally. Vic holds her and gives a small sharp slap across her face. She stops crying instantly and they look at each other in silence.

VIC

I am sorry.

Ashley picks herself and grabs her bag and heads towards the door.

ASHLEY

I thought you would understand.

Ashley walks out of the flat leaving Vic alone.

VIC

I do.

EXT. GARAGES, NEAR FLATS

Under the night sky Vic walks up to a row of garages. He finds his keys in his pocket and begins to open one of the garage doors.

VIC

Lets have a look what we have here then.

Inside Vic finds an old beaten up Ford Escort. The car looks to be in terrible condition.

VIC

Bloody hell.

Vic heads towards the back of the garage where he pulls out a set of old tools, dirty and covered in dust. He gets in the car and turns the ignition. Promisingly the car starts but then dies on him.

VIC

Hm. Lets have a look then.

Vic proceeds to look under the bonnet and establish what is wrong with the car.

VIC

Why am I doing this.

EXT. COUNCIL FLATS, EAST LONDON

Ashley is walking across the courtyard when her attention is placed on the beaten up Escort that is parked on the road opposite. Vic is inside the car with the engine running. Ashley rushes over to the passenger window.

ASHLEY
Morning.

VIC
Hi.

ASHLEY
I thought you didn't want to help me?

VIC
I changed my mind.

ASHLEY
This is a bit of a heap though.

VIC
Hey. I spent all night on this. Now do you want to go somewhere or not? Not too far, just a little day trip.

Ashley opens the passenger and buckles herself into the seat.

ASHLEY
Yeah, sure thing.

VIC
Well, where do you want to go then? I don't really know what's cool any more. I suppose you just want to hang around a shopping centre or outside McDonald's.

ASHLEY
Shut up.

VIC
Where then?

ASHLEY
I always wanted to go to the seaside but I never got taken. I never got to go anywhere so now I want to go where I want. I just want to get away from these grey towers.

VIC
(grinning)
The seaside?

ASHLEY

Don't laugh.

VIC

It's not exactly going to be warm
this time of year is it.

ASHLEY

That does not matter. The sea will
still be there and it will be
quiet.

VIC

The lady gets want the lady wants.

Vic puts the car in gear and begins to drive off.

INT. VIC'S CAR MORNING

Vic and Ashley are in the car heading to Brighton. Vic is
silent and concentrating on the road while Ashley plays with
the radio.

ASHLEY

Where is all the good music?

Ashley continues to tune the radio until she finds a song
that she likes.

ASHLEY

Ah. That's it.

Ashley bobs her head up and down to the music. Vic still
remains silent unaffected by the beat of the music.

ASHLEY

You don't really talk much. Well
you talk but not a lot, you know
what I mean?

Vic remains concentrated on the road.

ASHLEY

I mean I don't really know much
about you apart from your name and
that. Vic. Seems like a bit of an
old name to me. My uncle is called
Harold, that's a really old name.
Harold. Ha.

Vic remains silent. Ashley's attention wanders as she looks
out of the passenger window. Her attention is focused on the
cold surroundings outside the car.

ASHLEY

The frost is cool ennit? I like the way it looks like the cover of a Christmas card. It seems unreal. I remember when it snowed a few years ago and me and mum were staying with my aunt. Dad had gone off the rails again, mum didn't feel so great so we went and stayed with her somewhere up north. I think it was near Blackpool. Not near the sea, I never saw the sea but I remember mum saying it was near there. The snow came down over night and I woke up and saw it spread all over my aunt's garden. Her name's Anne, Auntie Anne. She isn't married to Harold. That is on the other side of my family.

Vic is still concentrating on the road while Ashley carries on with her description staring out of the window.

ASHLEY

I don't really get to see them. But anyway it snowed and I went out into the garden and just played around in the snow. I had never been able to do that before. It was so white and clean looking. You know?

She gestures towards Vic and turns away again.

ASHLEY

And then I played in it for hours and hours. Just running around, throwing snowballs and making a snowman. Pretty cool really. I loved that day.

Ashley quietens down her speech and continues to gaze out of the car window.

EXT. BRIGHTON

Vic parks the car up on the road. The area is quiet and deserted. An old couple sit on a bench looking out towards the sea. Most of the shops on the sea front are closed apart from a couple of cafés and newsagents. Ashley rushes out of the car and begins to hurriedly rush towards the pier. Vic is slowly locking up the car and walking behind her.

ASHLEY

Come on. We haven't got all day
granddad. I can get really close to
the sea there.

Ashley rushes down the deserted pier. She darts past the
closed attractions and pulls herself up against the rail
overlooking the sea.

ASHLEY

Can you smell it?

Vic is still behind walking up to where Ashley is.

ASHLEY

It stinks. Not in a nasty way.
Well, yeah, nasty but not
disgusting. Just different.

VIC

This is it then. You have got to
see the sea. I don't really see
what the fuss is about.

ASHLEY

What do you mean? Look at it. Look
how far you can see out.

VIC

It's just a mass of water. Nothing
special.

ASHLEY

(mimicking Vic)

"It's just a mass of water." No, it
is much more than that if you look
at it closely. Look at how it moves
and how it is free to go where it
wants. Nothing controls it.

VIC

Well the moon has an effect on the
tide and...

ASHLEY

(cutting in)

That's not what I mean. You would
not understand.

VIC

Try to explain it then?

ASHLEY

When I think of the sea I think of movement and its way of being everywhere. How it feeds into rivers and oceans. No, it sounds stupid I can't

VIC

Go on.

ASHLEY

Healing.

VIC

Healing?

ASHLEY

Yeah. The water heals you know. Water gives life, you need it to live. You can't live without water. When I am near the water I feel like I want to live.

VIC

That's pretty deep for a fourteen year old.

ASHLEY

I knew you wouldn't get it. No one does.

Ashley walks off in a strop back up the pier leaving Vic standing behind.

VIC

Ashley! Hold on a sec.

Ashley sits on a non-moving merry go round. Ashley appears to be simmering with anger.

ASHLEY

I thought you would understand. I thought you cared about what I had to say.

VIC

I do.

ASHLEY

Well you don't seem to show it. I barely know anything about you but I feel like I can trust you.

VIC
Talking isn't one of my strong
points. You might have noticed
that.

ASHLEY
I get that, I just want to know why
you are doing this for me then.

VIC
I just want to help you, that's
all.

Vic and Ashley stare at one another, both trying to figure out what the other person is thinking. Ashley breaks the stare and gets off the ride.

ASHLEY
Let's grab something to eat. I am
starving.

VIC
Hmm. OK.

Ashley walks off to one of the shops on the seafront. She finds a fish and chip shop open and buys an open bag of chips. Vic follows Ashley as she heads over to the stony beach to sit down. Vic joins her. The pair dip into the chips and look out towards the sea. The pair remain for a few hours. Ashley is throwing stones out in front of her while Vic lays on his back looking up to the sky. He observes the movements of the grey clouds above. Slowly rain begins to trickle down. The rain starts to become heavier and the pair quickly arise from their seated positions. Vic throws his jacket over Ashley as they begin to run back to the parked car.

INT. VIC'S CAR

VIC
That was fun.

ASHLEY
Yeah, it makes you feel alive
doesn't it.

Vic starts the engine and begins to journey back home.

EXT. COUNCIL FLATS, EAST LONDON

Vic parks the car close the flats in the evening. Ashley steps out of the car and looks back at Vic.

ASHLEY

Thank you Vic. That was really cool.

Ashley heads of back to her flat leaving Vic alone in the car. Vic produces a small smile. He goes into the glove compartment of the car and pulls out a small bottle of whiskey and takes a gulp.

VIC

Ah.

He places the bottle away, gets out of the car and locks it and heads back up to his flat.

INT. VIC'S FLAT NIGHT

Vic lies in bed during the night. He is suffering a nightmare again. Images of fire blur in his mind again. Against the burning reds a silhouette of what appears to be a young girl. Screams of agony are heard. Vic suddenly wakes up. His eyes are wide open. He wipes his brow and regains his breath.

INT. VIC'S FLAT MORNING

Banging is heard at Vic's door. Vic remains in bed disorientated and half asleep. The banging continues and Vic reluctantly heads for the door pulling on some trousers and a t-shirt. He answers the door to find Ashley standing there.

ASHLEY

Morning.

Ashley is holding a bigger bag than the one she held yesterday. Also in her hands is a purse full of money she has saved.

VIC

Let me guess.

ASHLEY

I was thinking maybe we could go somewhere again today please.

VIC
What? Again?

ASHLEY
Yeah I thought we could go
somewhere even further this time.
Make it like a little adventure or
something.

VIC
Don't you have school to go to? You
can't keep taking loads of time
off.

ASHLEY
My dad's missing. They will just
think I will be off with emotional
problems. They won't punish me for
going through a stressful situation
like this.

VIC
But your mum. Won't she cotton on
if you aren't at school or at home?
I don't want you getting into
trouble.

ASHLEY
You worry too much. I have a load
of cash I saved and you have a car
we can use. It makes sense.

VIC
I dunno.

ASHLEY
(Playing innocent)
But you wouldn't want to upset a
young girl like me especially with
all the trauma I am suffering at
the moment.

VIC
(reluctantly)
OK. Give me two minutes.

Vic heads off into the bathroom. He opens finds a half
filled bottle of whiskey in his jacket pocket and takes a
swig. He stares into the mirror.

VIC
What are you doing? It's only going
to make things worse. You killed
(MORE)

VIC (cont'd)
her dad. She still wants to be
around you. That can't be right.

Vic takes another swig from the bottle and puts it back in his jacket pocket. He splashes his face with some cold water and towels off the excess.

VIC
Lets go.

Vic walks back through into the living room to find Ashley going through a cabinet.

VIC
What are you doing?

ASHLEY
I was just having a look at

VIC
You don't go looking through other
peoples stuff. I though you trusted
me. I thought I was your friend.
Friends don't do stuff like that.

Vic heads over to Ashley taking the photos and paperwork out of her hand and throwing it back into the cabinet.

ASHLEY
I wasn't trying to upset you. I was
just having a nose around that's
all.

VIC
My belongings are personal.
Personal. I don't go looking
through your bag or things like
that. It's personal.

ASHLEY
I just wanted to know more about
you. Who you are? What you do?

VIC
Now do you want to go or not?

ASHLEY
Yeah.

VIC
Well let's make a move then. We are
going to be very busy.

ASHLEY

OK. I'm sorry.

VIC

Let's go.

Ashley heads out the door. Vic is extremely flustered and reaches into to his jacket pocket and takes a large swig of whiskey. He puts the bottle away and heads out of the front door.

INT. VIC'S CAR MORNING

Vic and Ashley sit silently in his car. Ashley goes into her bag and pulls out a road map. She flicks through the pages until she finds the correct page and shows it Vic pointing at the destination.

VIC

You want to go to Liverpool?

ASHLEY

Yep.

VIC

Why Liverpool?

ASHLEY

I just do. Now do you want to go there or not?

VIC

Well that's fine but Liverpool?

ASHLEY

It's a city I haven't seen before. It's meant to be a city of culture. Well that's what it said on the news so I thought why not. It's where the Beatles came from.

VIC

The Beatles?

ASHLEY

Yeah The Beatles you know?

VIC

I know who they are but aren't you a bit young for that. I mean I am a bit young for that.

ASHLEY

It doesn't matter I just want to go there. Anything has to be better than this place.

VIC

That's true. Liverpool it is then.

Vic starts up the car and begins to drive off. Ashley once again plays around with the radio until she finds a song that she likes.

EXT. SERVICE STATION

Vic pulls the car into a service station to fill it with petrol. The old car spits and bangs it's way to the pump. After Vic has paid he parks the car round the side so that the pair can go into the service station to get a drink.

INT. SERVICE STATION

VIC

(to cashier)

One coffee and a can of Coke.

ASHLEY

Vic!

VIC

(to cashier)

Sorry Diet Coke please. Cheers.

CASHIER

That will be four pound fifty please sir.

VIC

How much? For a bloody coffee and a coke.

ASHLEY

Here.

Ashley hands the money over to the cashier and they then take their drinks to a table.

VIC

Four pound bloody fifty for a coffee and a coke. Sorry Diet Coke. What a joke.

They both sit down at a table. Vic sugars his coffee while Ashley stares out at the cars on the forecourt. People around them on other tables give them curious looks. Vic seems too old to be her boyfriend but too young to be her dad. Ashley is unaware of the looks but Vic is aware of the prying eyes. He sips at his hot coffee cautiously.

VIC

Do I really look that old?

ASHLEY

What? Why?

VIC

No reason. Forget it.

Ashley is still staring out at the cars on the forecourt.

ASHLEY

(pointing)

I like that car over there. It's old but it looks cool.

VIC

A car is a car it gets you from A to B.

ASHLEY

Wouldn't you rather have a nicer car though.

VIC

If you haven't noticed I am not exactly raking in the cash at the moment. My means are simple, I don't need a lot.

ASHLEY

(Changing the subject)

Have you ever killed anyone before my dad?

Vic caught off guard spits up the coffee he was sipping on. People around stare at Vic as he wipes up the mess he has made with napkins.

VIC

(whispering)

Where did that come from?

ASHLEY

I would like to know that's all.

VIC

(Whispering)

I have never done anything wrong. I have never hurt someone unjustly.

ASHLEY

You seemed to know what you were doing. Like you had done it before. It was so quiet and peaceful. I have never seen anything like that before.

VIC

This isn't a conversation I want to have here. All I did was protect you. I did what was right.

ASHLEY

I understand that. How did you get those scars though? You haven't told me how that happened? Was it an accident? Did it happen in a fight? Did someone do it to you? Did you do it to yourself? I have wanted to ask you about those.

VIC

This is not something I want to discuss here. They are personal things I don't think I want you to know.

ASHLEY

Fine. I am going to the toilet before we leave.

Ashley gets up from the table and walks off to find the toilet. Vic remains flustered by Ashley's comments. He takes the whiskey bottle out of his inside jacket pocket and pours some of it's contents into his coffee. He continues to sip away at the drink while looking out of the window at the cars on the forecourt. Ashley returns and the pair get ready to leave. They remain silent with one another.

EXT. LIVERPOOL CITY CENTRE

Vic and Ashley arrive in Liverpool and Ashley drags Vic through the streets taking him into shops while she tries on various different clothes and outfits but does not purchase any. Vic is unimpressed by the experience but Ashley is filled with joy as the day passes and it starts to become evening.

VIC

I think it might be time to start making a move. We will have to leave son if you want to be back tonight. Your mum will be worried enough without having to worry about a missing daughter as well.

ASHLEY

But Vic I don't want to go. I thought we might be able to stay the night. Make this a proper adventure. There's no point going back after a day is there.

VIC

Seriously Ashley I don't feel comfortable with you being away from home for so long.

ASHLEY

You don't get it do you. I don't want to go home. I don't want to be there any more. I want to be as far away as I can possibly be. There isn't anything for me at home.

VIC

But

ASHLEY

No buts. You don't have anything at home either, you don't have a job, wife or kids. I thought you would want this.

VIC

Now hold on a sec. I didn't want to take you away from your family.

ASHLEY

What family? You killed my bastard dad and my mother hasn't even noticed I have gone yet.

Ashley pulls out her mobile.

ASHLEY

Not one call or text or anything from my mum all day. All she cares about is that stupid dick of a dad. She doesn't even care about me.

VIC
 Yes she does. She is your mother.
 Of course she cares about you.

ASHLEY
 Shut up. You just don't realise do
 you? I want to be free of it.

Ashley runs off through the streets.

VIC
 (shouting)
 Ashley! Wait!

Ashley has ran off too quickly for Vic. As she goes through a crowd of people she is completely out of sight of Vic's vision.

VIC
 Don't go.

EXT. LIVERPOOL, DARK BACKSTREETS

Ashley is walking alone along a dark road. Her running away has stumbled her into a seedy part of the city. It is late and the only people on the streets are either prostitutes or police trying to get them off the streets. Ashley walks cautiously down the road clutching tightly at her bag. She is incredibly frightened.

ASHLEY
 (to herself)
 What have I done?

A dark car pulls up beside her and drives slowly in relation to her walking speed. The electric windows open and a man appears looking at Ashley with a sinister lust.

KERB CRAWLER
 Hello love.

Ashley ignores and continues walking.

KERB CRAWLER
 I said hello love. You alright?

Ashley walks faster and in turn the car picks up speed.

KERB CRAWLER
 Right now stop there darling. I
 want a word with you.

Ashley freezes with fear.

KERB CRAWLER

Now c'mon love don't be shy. Pretty girl like you shouldn't be walking the streets all alone on a cold night like tonight. You can come in here if you want. It's a bit warmer in here. Thirty notes sound good.

Ashley steps towards the window.

ASHLEY

Thirty?

KERB CRAWLER

Yeah, sound good me darling?

ASHLEY

Fuck off pervert before I scream my lungs off!

KERB CRAWLER

What the? You fu...

ASHLEY

(screaming)

Argh! Help me!

KERB CRAWLER

You little prick tease!

The car speeds off and Ashley stops screaming.

ASHLEY

Dick.

Ashley continues to walk down the road. She passes some takeaways and comes to an even darker part of the city. She carefully looks around as she walks alone. Suddenly she is grabbed from behind. Her mouth is held muffling her cries for help.

ASHLEY

(Muffled)

Help! Ugh! Get off me!

KERB CRAWLER

You little bitch! You thought you would treat me like that you little fucking whore.

The man holds her tightly and throws her up against a brick wall.

KERB CRAWLER

You do not turn down an offer from
me you little bitch! Do you
understand?

Ashley is curled up against the bottom of the wall. She is disorientated from a knock to her head. The man looms over her menacingly. He begins to loosen his belt.

KERB CRAWLER

Yeah, you stupid cow.

The man gets in closer towards Ashley as he is loosening his trousers aloud thump is heard. A brick has just smashed against the attackers head. With blurry vision Ashley makes out the shape of Vic standing over her attackers unconscious body. Vic starts to kick the heap on the floor.

VIC

(staggered speech)

You fucking. Stupid. Fuck. Prick.
Never. Ever. Touch. I. you.

ASHLEY

Stop Vic!

VIC

Huh?

ASHLEY

Stop it. Leave him as he is.

VIC

But I was...

ASHLEY

I know. Leave it.

Vic picks up Ashley, she kicks the man hard into his groin area. They begin to walk back own the road, Ashley is linked to Vic's arm.

VIC

Shall we find a room for the night
then?

INT. BED AND BREAKFAST

Vic and Ashley walk into a dreary looking B and B. The establishment looks untouched since the seventies. Vic approaches the old Clerk at the desk.

CLERK

Evening. I was just about to close up. It's getting on a bit late you see. Don't normally get folk arriving this late you see. Well there was that time when this drunk fellah came up banging at the door. Must have been gone two in the morning and he wanted a room. I had to go my window and say "No. You can't stay here tonight. We're closed."

Vic and Ashley look at each other bemused with the Clerk.

CLERK

It happens every now and then and I say to the wife that we just must put our foot down on these louts. So what can I do you for?

VIC

We would like a room please.

CLERK

Of course you do. Well we only have one room remaining and you will have to share that with your daughter.

VIC

My daughter?

ASHLEY

What he means is that I am his niece.

CLERK

Oh do forgive me. My mistake, you look old enough to be her father but with my eyesight lately I struggle with a lot of things. I was saying to the wife only the other day that I swore I saw a mallard the other day. That was quite absurd. What, with the migrating patterns and all at this time of year it would be impossible to spot a mallard in this area. Unless it was a coot it could have well been...

VIC

So how much will the room cost?

CLERK

Ah yes, the room. It will cost thirty five of your English pounds for the night sir. Money is taken up front. Breakfast will be served in the dining area between seven and half eight.

Ashley hands over the correct money.

CLERK

Thank you madam. Here's the key. If you take the stairs up two flights you will then have to take the turning on the right and you will find there room number eleven. The bathroom is on the other side of the room. Be careful in the mornings though. The lock is a bit loose.

The clerk hands the key to Vic.

VIC

Cheers.

CLERK

Thank you sir and goodnight young lady. Don't let the bed bugs bite. Ha. Little ones are so cute.

Vic and Ashley head up the stairs and enter room eleven.

INT.ROOM 11

Vic and Ashley enter the room. The décor is in keeping with the seventies feel of the establishment. Tatty wallpaper is peeling at the ceiling. A small dirty window overlooks the street below and the only view is the surrounding rooftops. At one end of the room is a small sink and cupboard with an old kettle sitting on a draining board. On the other side of the room a double bed is against the wall with a bedside table at the side. At the foot of the bed in the middle of the room is an old armchair. Ashley dumps her bag on the floor and goes to sit on the edge of the bed. Vic closes the door behind him and stands absorbing his surroundings.

VIC
A double bed? He didn't say
anything about a double bed.

ASHLEY
What's the matter? It's only a bed.

VIC
(panicking)
Yeah. A double bed. I thought it
would be a couple of singles or
something like that. He didn't say
a double bed.

ASHLEY
It's OK. I don't mind sharing.

VIC
What? No. I can't share a bed with
you. You're only...

ASHLEY
It's OK. I really don't mind if we
share.

VIC
No. I can't. I.

Ashley looks up at Vic suggestively. She begins to unzip her
jacket.

ASHLEY
You saved me tonight. You saved me
from God knows what. I have never
had someone defend me like you did.

Ashley reaches over and grabs Vic's hand. She pulls Vic in
closer towards her.

ASHLEY
I just want to thank you.

Vic pulls away his hand sharply and backs up a couple of
steps away from her.

VIC
What are you doing?

ASHLEY
Huh?

VIC

What are you doing? Why are you being like this?

ASHLEY

I. I. I thought it's what you wanted. I thought you liked me.

VIC

Huh? I do you like you but...

ASHLEY

(starting to well up)

Why would you be with me otherwise?

VIC

What? I don't want...

ASHLEY

Do I disgust you or something?

VIC

No. You are...

ASHLEY

Then what? Am I not good enough for you. Is that it?

VIC

No that's not it. I don't want that from you.

ASHLEY

Why not?

VIC

You're a teenage girl for fuck sake. I, I, I would never take advantage of that. I am not with you cos I want to have sex with you. I thought what we have is a friendship thing, nothing sexual.

ASHLEY

I just wanted to thank you. I thought that's what you would want. Isn't that what all men want? Sex.

VIC

I don't. Not with you. I thought you understood our thing. I don't look at you and think of lust or anything

(MORE)

VIC (cont'd)
like that. I look at you as my
little sister.

ASHLEY
You have a sister?

VIC
No. But you know what I mean. I
don't have *those* sort of feelings
for you. God no.

ASHLEY
(sobbing)
I am sorry. I only thought you
would stay with me if I gave you a
reason to. I didn't realise that's
how you felt about me. You don't
really open up about your feelings
or intentions. I just didn't want
to be left alone.

VIC
I am not going to leave you alone.
Why would I do that? You the only
person that cares about me.

Vic walks back over to Ashley as she sobs on the bed. He sits down beside her and tentatively pats her on the back looking incredibly awkward.

ASHLEY
I am sorry.

Ashley pushes her body into Vic's chest. Vic gradually and gently puts his arms around her. Her sobs are muffled her head is cushioned by Vic's chest.

VIC
Sssh. Don't worry. Sssh.

Vic gently places Ashley into the bed. He pulls the duvet over her and tucks her in. He moves away from the bed and goes to sit in the armchair. Vic watches Ashley as she gradually falls asleep and her sobbing stops. Vic reaches into to his inside pocket. Takes a swig from his bottle of whiskey and puts it away. He slowly drops his head and falls asleep in the chair.

INT.ROOM 11 MORNING

Daylight breaks through the dirty window. Vic is still asleep in the armchair while Ashley sits on the end of the bed staring at him. Ashley gives Vic a gentle tap and sits back down. Vic begins to open his eyes slowly adjusting to the light in the room. He rubs his eyes and looks back at Ashley opposite him.

ASHLEY
(cheery)
Morning.

VIC
(Groggy)
Uh huh.

INT. BED AND BREAKFAST DINING ROOM

Ashley briskly walks into the dining room heading towards the table laid out with Various cereals, toast, preserves, juices and tea and coffee machines. An elderly couple are sitting in the corner. Vic follows slowly behind her. Ashley picks out her cereal and juice and finds an empty table. Vic pours a cup of coffee and joins Ashley.

ASHLEY
(chewing)
Did you sleep well?

VIC
Uh. Yeah. Out like a light.

ASHLEY
Aren't you a bit old for
nightmares?

VIC
Huh? What? Nightmares?

ASHLEY
Yeah. I woke up cos all I could
hear was your moaning and groaning.
My dad used to get like that when
he was drunk and fell asleep but
that would be cos of the drink. Was
like you were screaming a bit. I
had to put the pillow over my head.

VIC
(uncomfortable)

(MORE)

VIC (cont'd)

I don't know what you mean. I don't get nightmares. Well I don't remember them anyway.

ASHLEY

But you were swinging around and everything. I didn't know what to do. Has something bad happened to you or something? I saw it on telly, it's all those "repressed emotions" and stuff like that.

Vic takes a large gulp of his coffee burning his tongue as he swallows.

VIC

Like I said I don't remember. It's just dreams. None of it makes sense. Just random thoughts that's all. Not like any of it would make sense normally.

ASHLEY

No but some of it has to be based on stuff that has actually happened. I have dreams with my mum in them sometimes. Silly things like when we were at my aunts and things. My aunt's!

VIC

What about her?

ASHLEY

Lets go there today. It can't be that far. I know it's near Blackpool. That's not too far away from here is it?

VIC

Whoa. Hold on a sec. Shouldn't we be heading back today. Your mum isn't going to realise you are not home sooner rather than later.

ASHLEY

No she won't. I told you, she hasn't called or anything. C'mon please, it shouldn't take long to get there. I want you to see it. I want you to see how it great it is up there.

VIC

But

ASHLEY

No buts this time, we are going there. This is *our* adventure, we can't miss out on it. Now I am pretty sure the place is called...let me think. Wee, Weeton. Yeah that's it. It had loads of fields around it and everything.

VIC

Weeton?

ASHLEY

Yeah. It will be cool then we can head into Blackpool and stay at another B and B. Ah c'mon.

Vic looks at Ashley as she opens her eyes in a puppy dog fashion.

VIC

OK.

ASHLEY

Yes.

VIC

After that though we really have to think about taking you home.

ASHLEY

Yeah sure, whatever.

Ashley scoffs up the rest of her breakfast and rushes back up to her room to grab her bag. Once she is ready they leave the bed and breakfast.

INT. VIC'S CAR

The pair are on the motorway heading towards Weeton. Ashley falls into her routine of playing with the radio and singing aloud.

EXT. SERVICE STATION

Vic refuels the car while Ashley is inside the petrol station stocking up on sweets and crisps. She stumbles out of the door with more than she is able to carry.

INT. VIC'S CAR

Ashley scoffs on sweets as she sings to the music on the radio. Vic no longer stays heavily concentrated on the road. He produces a small smile. They eventually arrive at Weeton. Ashley points around towards the direction she thinks the house is in.

ASHLEY

I think it's over to the right or was it the left? Wait a sec. That's it over there. That church. I know it was past a church, it has to be that one. Follow the road down there.

Vic drives where he is told as Ashley flails her aims in various directions.

ASHLEY

That's it there. Stop over here.

VIC

You sure?

ASHLEY

Positive. That has to be the place. That's what I remember.

Vic pulls the car over to the side of the road and switches the engine off. The pair stare for a few seconds at the house in front of them. Ashley takes a breath and is the first to get out of the car, Vic follows.

EXT. AUNT ANNE'S HOUSE, WEETON

Ashley steps up to the garden gate of a detached house surrounded by a waist high brick wall. Beyond the boundaries of the house lies a number of farm fields. Frost is still evident from the cold night before as it forms a blanket over the lawn. Ashley leans on the gate peering into the garden. Vic stands behind her.

ASHLEY

I used to play out here for hours.
I remember over by that flowerbed
there.

Ashley points to what is now a mound of brown frosted over soil.

ASHLEY

I used to pick the petals off the
flowers and mix it with water to
make perfume. It didn't smell of
anything but Aunt Anne always said
it was lovely. Yeah and over
there, remember I said I played in
the snow?

VIC

Uh huh.

ASHLEY

Yeah, that's where we built the
snowman. That was so it could look
all over the fields and that. You
an see for miles out here when it's
clear. Not like at home where it's
block after block after block. No,
it's much better out here.

Vic looks around and takes a long deep breath. He rubs his cold hands together and blows on them.

VIC

It sure is.

ASHLEY

Look how beautiful it is. It's so
quiet out here. No rude boys
thumping by in their bangers.
Nobody arguing and shouting near
you. No hood rats terrorising you.
Just calm.

VIC

So don't just stand there then. Go
knock on the door. It's bloody
freezing out here.

Vic gently nudges Ashley forward but she digs her heels into the ground and does not move.

ASHLEY

What?

VIC

Go on. Ring the bell or something.
Go in and say hello. At least do
that so that she can tell your mum
and let her know you are safe.

ASHLEY

I can't go in there?

VIC

Why not? If you are worried about
your mum finding out I am sure if
you explain to her she might not
tell you mum. She's meant to be
your cool aunt.

ASHLEY

No. I can't do it.

VIC

I thought that's why we came here?

ASHLEY

I didn't come here to see her. I
came to see the house.

VIC

That doesn't make sense, if you are
here you should see her.

ASHLEY

I can't see her because she isn't
here.

VIC

She at work or something. I suppose
she might be. I don't see a car or
anything.

ASHLEY

(becoming increasingly
frustrated)

No I can't see her because she s
dead.

VIC

What?

ASHLEY

She is dead. She has been for the last year. I never said I was coming to see her. I said I was coming to see the house.

Ashley begins to cry.

VIC

I just thought that we were here to see her. You never said that she was dead. I am sorry.

ASHLEY

You never asked and I said I wanted to come to the house. Not to see my aunt.

VIC

I just assumed.

ASHLEY

Well you got it wrong.

VIC

How did it?

ASHLEY

Cancer. I think. I don't really know. Mum came home one day and told me that my Aunt Anne had died and there was nothing no one could do about it. That's all I know. I was so mad. I wanted to go to the funeral but *daddy* told me I was too young to go to funerals. It wouldn't be right if I went at my age. I am too young to understand what is going on. I knew what was going on. My aunt had died.

VIC

I will leave you for a minute. I will be waiting in the car. Come back when you are ready.

Vic walks back over to the car and seats inside leaving Ashley standing at the gate looking at the house and garden.

ASHLEY

(crying)

Why? Why did you? You didn't have to leave me. You left me all alone. Why would you do that?

Ashley cries into the sleeves of her jacket. She rolls up one of sleeves and pulls off a bead bracelet from her arm.

ASHLEY
Remember this?

Ashley takes off the bracelet, kneels down and lays at the bottom of the gate.

ASHLEY
You can have it back now.

She picks herself up and takes a long look at the house.

ASHLEY
Bye.

Ashley then heads back into the passenger side of the car.

INT. VIC'S CAR

VIC
Where to now?

ASHLEY
Blackpool. I want to see the sea.

EXT. BLACKPOOL BEACH

Ashley is sitting alone on a bench looking out into the murky sea. A single tear is rolling down her cheek. Vic appears behind her walking towards the bench and sits down next to her. Ashley quickly wipes her face.

VIC
I managed to get a room for us over there. Everywhere is bloody closed. Twin beds this time. None of that hassle. My back is...

ASHLEY
Cool.

VIC
OK. We can head over there in a bit.

Vic and Ashley both stare out towards the sea. Ashley shuffles over to Vic and leans on his shoulder.

INT. HOTEL ROOM, BLACKPOOL

Vic and Ashley both lay in their beds asleep. This hotel room looks untouched since the eighties. The room comprises of the two single beds, a small table with a small portable television on it and two fold down chairs and small shower cubicle at the end of the room. A small glint of street light shines through the window. Ashley is fast asleep. Vic begins to be submerged in one of his nightmares. He turns in the bed violently from side to side. His harsh movement knocks over a lamp of the side table next to the bed. The noise awakes Ashley from her slumber. Instantly she goes towards him grabbing his shoulder.

ASHLEY

Vic, Vic. What's wrong?

She continues to shake him gently.

ASHLEY

Vic. Wake up. Vic. You're scaring me Vic. Please wake up.

VIC

Uh!

Vic suddenly opens his eyes in a daze.

VIC

Uh. What's the matter? What's wrong?

ASHLEY

Vic you were dreaming again. It was worse than last night. Are you OK? Do you need a drink?

VIC

No, no. I'm fine.

Vic gets out the bed and switches the light on. He reaches for his jacket on the floor by the bed. He takes out the bottle of whiskey, sits on the end of the bed and takes a swig from the bottle.

VIC

Ah.

ASHLEY

What are you doing? Why are you drinking?

VIC

I just need it to calm my nerves
that's all. Nothing to worry about.
Just calming my nerves.

ASHLEY

Your dreams aren't normal. What
happened to you? I knew you weren't
telling me the truth. Why can't you
just open up to me?

VIC

There's nothing to say.

ASHLEY

It doesn't matter what you have
done in your past, it doesn't
bother me.

VIC

(viciously)

Why do you think *I* have done
something wrong. I haven't done
anything wrong.

ASHLEY

I was...

VIC

Just cos I look like this doesn't
mean I am the bad person. The black
sheep, the freak.

Vic reaches into his jacket pockets and pulls out his wallet
and throws it on the bed towards Ashley.

VIC

There you go. Open it up have a
look. You won't find any money in
there but have a look.

ASHLEY

What?

VIC

Just open it and have a look.

Ashley unfolds the old weathered leather wallet. A small
amount of change lies inside, no notes. Tucked underneath a
section of the wallet is what appears to be a piece of card.

VIC
Pull that out.

Gently Ashley pulls out the folded card. Carefully she unfolds it. It is a photograph.

VIC
You see?

Ashley looks in detail at the photograph. She sees a group of soldiers in what appears to be a rocky desert type surrounding. All the soldiers are posing for the photo. Crouched at the bottom in the middle is Vic holding onto his rifle.

ASHLEY
That's you. That's you in the middle there holding a gun. What is this?

VIC
That was my family. My regiment. The Grenadier Guards 1st Battalion.

ASHLEY
You were in the army?

VIC
Yes, since I was sixteen years old.

ASHLEY
Where is this? Were you in Iraq?

VIC
No. Helmand Province, Afghanistan. I was lieutenant.

Vic takes another gulp from the whiskey bottle.

ASHLEY
In this photo you don't have any scars. What happened to you?

VIC
We infiltrated a village close to where we believed our target was hiding. We then came under fire as the whole village was attacked by insurgents. I was pinned down in a house as the rest of my unit was forced out into the open on the streets.

Vic starts to well up and tears begin to run down his face.

VIC

They set alight the houses. They burnt down everything. I was trapped inside with a woman and her three young girls.

Vic knocks back another shot of whiskey.

VIC

I moved them into the corner. As far away from the flames as I could. I gave her her children and told her to stay where she was. "Stay there! You'll be fine" I looked for a way out. I couldn't find one. The flames came closer and closer. My uniform began to burn. My arms and chest got so hot. My helmet and visor managed to protect my face but the heat. The heat was too much. I rolled around on the floor and managed to beat down the flames. I lay on the floor in agony. I looked over to the other side of the building. I saw the woman huddled with the children. I thought they were safe. I thought they would be safe. The fire and heat started to warp the building. I could here the beams beginning to crack and burst under the pressure. Then crack!

ASHLEY

What happened?

Vic pulls himself and stumbles over to the shower cubicle. He begins to run a cold shower. He stands by the shower.

VIC

I laid there and part of the building came crashing down. I laid there and watch a mother and her children get crushed by shit and debris. I just laid there. I could just here one of the children screaming, crying out loud and all I could do was lay there. I was frozen. Screaming, all I could hear was screaming. My legs wouldn't move I couldn't lift my arms. All I could here was screaming. That little girl.

Vic puts the bottle down for a second and cups a handful of cold water and splashes it over his face.

VIC

The rest of the building then fell over the top of me. I was trapped under a pile of shit and debris. I laid under that shit for two days before I was found. The screaming eventually stopped after a day. I couldn't do anything. I could help that little kid. All I could do was listen.

Vic then goes into the shower cubicle and sits at the bottom as the cold shower pours over his hunched body.

ASHLEY

Vic?

VIC

(ignoring)

They gave me counselling. loads of counselling. Told me I would be fine. Fine, fine, fine. "Vic you will be fine." "Mr Holden you are going to be fine." How would they know, they weren't there. they didn't see what I saw, they didn't hear what I heard. Fine. Fucking dicks. Do I look fine to you? Look at me. I am a waste of space. I couldn't save them.

Ashley goes towards Vic and sits with him at the bottom of the shower cubicle and reassuringly puts her arms around him.

ASHLEY

It's OK. It's OK.

VIC

(crying)

I couldn't save them. I couldn't save them.

ASHLEY

You saved me didn't you. Sssh.

Ashley reaches up and turns off the cold water. The pair sit wet huddled together.

INT. HOTEL ROOM, BLACKPOOL. MORNING

Ashley sits alone in the room in the morning playing around with the television flicking through the channels. Vic is across the road on the beach staring out at the sea. he can be seen from the hotel window. Ashley eventually stops channel hopping when she is shocked by the pictures she sees on the television.

EXT. COUNCIL FLATS, EAST LONDON

NEWS REPORTER

We are coming to you live from this busy East London council estate with the tragic news about a missing girl. This story is made even more shocking as it was the girl's father who mysteriously disappeared without a trace days before this incident. The girl's name is Ashley Gaines, a fourteen year old, about 5ft with short dark hair.

A school photo of Ashley appears on the screen.

NEWS REPORTER

Ashley has not attended school and the alarm was raised when a teacher called her mother Karen Gaines. It is believed combined with the level of stress created by her missing husband Thomas Gaines that she was unaware of her daughter's disappearance. At this stage the police have not confirmed a link between the two disappearances but we are awaiting a statement. The public are advised to keep a look out if the girl is spotted and to immediately contact the police. It is unsure at this stage whether the young Ashley has run way or possibly has been abducted. We are now going to go live to the mother's home where it is believed she is going to make a plea for information on her daughter's whereabouts.

INT. HOTEL ROOM, BLACKPOOL. MORNING

Ashley stares on at the screen in disbelief. As she watches pictures of her and her father appear on the screen.

ASHLEY

What the? My phone. She never called my phone. The stupid.

INT. ASHLEY'S FLAT. NEWS

Karen is sitting on the sofa with tears in her eyes. She is clutching a bundle of damp tissues in one hand and a picture of Ashley in the other.

KAREN

I just want to say if you are listening Ashley please come home. Please come back home. I need you back home with me. I know things have been hard with your father missing but please come back to me. I am sorry I haven't been focused on you lately, I am really sorry. Please just call me or anything. Make some sort of contact just so I know that you are all right. I need to know you are safe. Please come back to me Ashley, I love you. That's it I can't say any more.

Karen cries into her tissues as neighbours comfort her.

EXT. COUNCIL FLATS. NEWS

The news reporter is now surrounded by people from the estate.

NEWS REPORTER

We have just recently had a witness come forward stating that he saw Ashley get into a car two days ago.

YOUTH A

Yeah, that's right. I saws her get into a car and that the other day like. She had this like big rucksack and that and got into this beat down motor, you get me. Some Ford ennit. I didn't see no driver though. Not close up like. Guy just looked heavy you know. Big like.

NEWS REPORTER

Have you made this statement to the police?

YOUTH A

No. I just want to get on the box though ennit. This goes out to my EZ boys, brrrrp!

INT. HOTEL ROOM, BLACKPOOL. MORNING

Ashley in a panic switches off the television. As she switches it off Vic walks through the door and startles Ashley.

VIC

You OK?

ASHLEY

Yeah fine, great. Just getting our stuff together. Thought we better get ready.

VIC

What? You finally want to go home then? You changed your tune. OK. I will be ready in a minute.

ASHLEY

Hurry up. Like you said I don't want to worry my mum and all.

VIC

What's wrong?

ASHLEY

Nothing. I think you would should just get a move on that's all. I don't know how long it will take for us to get back and I don't want us to get stuck in traffic or anything like that. I decided to call my mum. Thought I should tell her where I was. I lied. Said I just needed to cool my head off so I stayed over at one of my imaginary friend's place.

VIC

OK, OK. I will hurry up. I just have to go for a slash and then I am ready.

ASHLEY

Good.

INT. VIC'S CAR

Ashley quickly gets into the passenger seat of the car. Vic throws Ashley's bag in the back then seats in the driver's seat and starts the engine. Ashley looks frightened and stares out of the window.

VIC

You not going to put the radio on?

Vic reaches over to turn the radio on. Ashley quickly taps Vic's hand away from the machine.

VIC

What? You not

ASHLEY

No. I got a headache. It really hurts. I thought I might just keep things quiet. I don't want to make it any worse than it is. Must be the sea air or something. I don't think I am used to it that's all. Don't have any painkillers on me.

VIC

OK. I will stop somewhere on the way back and grab some.

ASHLEY

(sharply)

No. You don't have to do that. I will be fine. just have to rest a bit. We don't need to stop. There's no need for stopping. I will feel better by the time we get home. Just going to close my eyes for a bit. That will make it better.

VIC

OK.

Vic puts the car in gear and begins to drive back home.

EXT. COUNCIL FLATS. NEWS

Television crews are set out on the courtyard. Police are present on the estate and many of the residents are public and congregating around the area.

NEWS REPORTER

We now have further information about the possible of abduction of Ashley Gaines. Based on eyewitness accounts and information collected from the residents we now have a more accurate picture of the event that has tragically unfolded on this estate. We understand now that the car in question is a dark blue Ford Escort, believed to be early nineties. The registration is unknown but the police are looking at local CCTV cameras to see if they can spot the car. The driver is as of yet unidentified but believed to also be a resident of the estate.

As the reporter is speaking to the camera the old woman who reported the kids to the police starts to but in and try and get on the camera.

OLD WOMAN

Excuse me. Excuse me.

NEWS REPORTER

We are going live at the moment madam. Could you please step back behind that line there please.

OLD WOMAN

I think I know who that man is. The one who abducted little Ashley. I think I know who the fellah is.

NEWS REPORTER

And you are?

OLD WOMAN

I am Mrs Bishop, I live up there at number sixty one. I think I know who he is. Well not for sure but I think I do.

NEWS REPORTER

Have you told the police madam?

MRS BISHOP

No not yet I wanted to tell you and the public. I saw that little lad earlier on here and it ringed a bell. I remember a fellah who used to have a Ford down in the garages then I remembered who he was. Well, I don't know who he is but I could describe him to you. Weird looking chap, about six foot or six foot two. Big fellah, muscles and all that. But you could spot easily cos all of his scars. These ain't just little ones. Loads of scars all around his arms and up to his neck. Quiet bloke, he never said much. Always kept his down. I am certain that's him. You can let everyone know now so that they can find that poor little girl.

NEWS REPORTER

We don't want to be scaremongering now. This information must be passed on to the police.

Reporter turns back to camera.

NEWS REPORTER

Well there you have it. Possibly more information about the whereabouts of poor Ashley Gaines. We now hope that the police can make use of this lead and hopefully find out where she is. At this moment our thoughts are with her poor mother.

EXT. SERVICE STATION

Vic is refuelling the car. Ashley looks out of the window nervously unsure of what is going on and what awaits her when she arrives home.

INT. SERVICE STATION

Vic goes the cashier to pay for the petrol. He hands over the cash. As he passes over the money the cashier stares at Vic in detail. Vic shrugs off the look and walks out of the shop back to the car. The cashier gets on the phone immediately.

CASHIER

Uh. Hello. Police. Yeah I think I have just seen something important.

EXT. COUNCIL FLATS, EAST LONDON

Vic's car approaches the estate in the evening as the sky begins to turn dark. Instantly Vic notices the large presence of people on the estate.

INT. VIC'S CAR

VIC

What the? What's all this about then?

Ashley sinks her body deeper into the seat.

EXT. COUNCIL FLATS, EAST LONDON

The estate is now full of news crews, well wishers are holding candles and police are scattered throughout the area. Vic slows the car down unsure of where to park it.

INT. VIC'S CAR

ASHLEY

I think you should take it round the back. Back to the garage. It looks far too busy round here.

VIC

I am just a bit intrigued that's all. See what's going on.

ASHLEY

No!

VIC

What?

ASHLEY

No. You can't go over there.

VIC

Why not? I only want to get a quick look.

ASHLEY

You can't go over there. Why do you think they are there?

VIC

I dunno. That's why I want to have a look, no harm in looking is there?

ASHLEY

You idiot, they are there because of me.

VIC

What?

ASHLEY

Me. They think I have run away or something like that, they think I have been kidnapped by some pervert.

VIC

(panicking)

Huh? You called your mum though didn't you? You called your mum? I came into the room. You said you wanted to go home. You said you called your mum. Why? Why would this happen if your called her?

ASHLEY

I didn't call her. I was too scared. She was on TV and everything. I couldn't call her. I just thought if we came home I would be able to sneak in and just say I had to have some time alone. I didn't think this would happen. I didn't think it would go this far. I think they think you have taken me. I didn't want to worry you.

VIC

Worry me? I am fucking petrified. I have to take you back.

ASHLEY

What?

VIC

I have to take you back. Take you back home. Let them know you are safe. Then you can tell them what happened. I didn't hurt you. I wouldn't hurt you.

Vic drives over to the group of people.

ASHLEY

Vic. Please don't. Turn it around. Let me sort it out.

VIC

I can't do that they have to know.

EXT. COUNCIL FLATS, EAST LONDON

As Vic pulls the car up, police, news crews and well wishers all become aware of it. Instantly a roar of commotion occurs. News crews move forward and the well wishers form a mob like entity. The police quickly move forward in formation towards the car. Vic steps out of the car and begins to walk forward. Ashley quickly runs in front of him to shield him from the mass of people heading towards him.

ASHLEY

Wait! Stop!

Ashley is pulled away by a police officer. An angry mob moves closer towards Vic. He stands there silent.

MOB VOICE

You fucking perv!

MOB VOICE

Oih! You nonce! Get out of here!

MOB VOICE

Fucking kill him!

MOB VOICE

What have you done to her you queer!

MOB VOICE

Get the prick!

Police quickly grab Vic away from the oncoming mob and bundle him into the back of a squad car. The mob begin to hurl whatever they can get their hands on. Missiles whistle through the air and pelt the vehicle. Cameramen and photographers get as close to the car as they possibly can before the squad makes a hasty retreat throttling down the road with the sirens sounding and lights flashing.

INT. POLICE STATION INTERROGATION ROOM 1

Vic sits alone at a desk in the middle of a dimly lit room. He looks around his surroundings confused and unsure of exactly what is happening to him. The door opens in walks a uniformed Officer Lewis followed by Detective Patrick Jones. He is wearing plain clothes, a navy suit with a white shirt yellow tie. The officer sets up the recording equipment and sits down. Detective Jones remains standing.

DETECTIVE JONES

Interview commencing with suspect Vincent Holden. The date is the nineteenth of November two thousand and seven. The time is approximately eighteen hours fifty two minutes. Suspect has declined the presence of a legal representative. Vincent. Do you understand why you are here?

VIC

It's Vic.

DETECTIVE JONES

OK. Vic. Do you understand why you are here?

VIC

No. All I did was bring her home. I

DETECTIVE JONES

You are here *Vic* because you are under suspicion for the kidnap of Ashley Gaines. Do you remember who that is? The girl that was in your car. Do you mind trying to explain that for me Vic.

VIC

I haven't done anything wrong. She wanted me to take her away. I haven't done anything wrong.

DETECTIVE JONES

(piping up)

You are a twenty nine year old man
Vic. She is a fourteen year old
girl. What were you thinking of?
Did you take Ashley against her
will? Did you kidnap her?

VIC

No. I would never do that. I would
never kidnap anyone. What do you
think I am.

Detective Jones moves closer in towards Vic until he is
looming over him. Vic can feel his warm breath passing over
his shoulder. The smell of cigarettes and coffee on the
detectives breath causes Vic's nose to twitch.

DETECTIVE JONES

I dunno Vic. At the moment I think
you are a kidnapper. A twisted man
who likes to give young girls
a ride in his car. What are you
Vic?

VIC

I am no one. I am not a kidnapper.
I was helping her. I wanted to help
her, she asked me to help. I am not
what you think I am.

DETECTIVE JONES

We found a bottle of booze on your
person. Do you like to get drunk
Vic or is that what you give to the
girls so it's a bit easier?

VIC

No. That's mine, I wouldn't harm
anyone. I don't get girls drunk or
kidnap them.

DETECTIVE JONES

We have Ashley in the other room
now speaking to our officers. They
are going to find out what you did.
How you took advantage of a young
girl and took her away from her
family. We will find out what you
really are Vic. Sooner or later we
will know exactly what a piece of
work you are.

INT. POLICE STATION INTERROGATION ROOM 2

Ashley and her mother Karen sit at a desk while two officers ask her questions. Ashley is crying intensely. Her mother is cuddling up to her daughter's shoulders trying to support her. Karen is also crying. The officers takes notes and continue to ask questions.

INT. POLICE STATION INTERROGATION ROOM 1

Detective Jones stands back in the corner away from Vic.

DETECTIVE JONES

You told our officers the other day that you didn't know who Thomas Gaines was. Is that true.

VIC

Yeah. I didn't know him.

DETECTIVE JONES

It seems a little strange that his daughter has disappeared with you though. Does that not see a little odd to you Officer Lewis.

OFFICER LEWIS

Yes it does sir.

DETECTIVE JONES

If you knew the young Ashley Gaines, how come you never knew who her father was? I find that a tad mysterious.

VIC

I didn't know her that well. I never met her dad. I didn't know who he was.

DETECTIVE JONES

If you didn't know her that well why was she away with you. Seems a little odd that a young girl would go off with a man twice her age that she didn't know very well. Look at you. You ain't exactly the prettiest of pictures are you. You look mean. You look dangerous. Why would she run away with someone like you? Could you explain that to me?

VIC
We became friends.

DETECTIVE JONES
Ha. You became friends. You expect me to believe that, you'll have to do better sunshine.

VIC
It's true. We became friends. She wanted to go away. She wanted to get away from her home. I didn't force her. It's what she wanted. We were friends. Good friends.

DETECTIVE JONES
(Frustrated)
I don't believe you Vic. I think you're lying to me and I think you know something about the disappearance of her father as well. You are not telling me everything Vic. I can tell. You're panicking Vic, you are nervous. I can tell you are. I know you are hiding something from me Vic. Now tell me.

VIC
(cracking up)
I don't know anything. I haven't done anything. We went to Brighton and looked at the sea. We went to Liverpool and went and the shops, we went to her dead aunt's house. We went to Blackpool and looked at the sea again and then we came back. I am telling you that I have not harmed her or taken her against her will. We are friends.

Detective Jones comes back over to Vic menacingly and frustrated. He takes his jacket off and loosens the tie around his neck.

DETECTIVE JONES
I have had enough of this now Vic. You are going to tell me now exactly everything that you know. Do I make myself

The door knocks. An officer signals to Detective Jones and calls him to one side.

DETECTIVE JONES
Interview suspended at eighteen
fifty eight.

Officer Lewis pauses the recording. Detective Jones and other officer whisper to each other in the corner. Detective Jones' body language suggests that he is aggravated by what he has just been told. The officer after delivering his news leaves. Detective stands still facing the wall with his back to Vic.

DETECTIVE JONES
It looks like you are free to go.

VIC
What?

DETECTIVE JONES
You are free to go? That's the end
of our questioning. We no longer
require your services Mr Holden.

VIC
(surprised)
How come?

Detective Jones turns around and faces Vic.

DETECTIVE JONES
It appears that the young girl has
corroborated your story. She
claims that you did not abduct her
so there will be no charges made
against you. We have nothing to
hold you on. You are free to go.

Vic begins to stand up and walk towards the door. As he opens the door Detective Jones grabs Vic tightly on the shoulder.

DETECTIVE JONES
Remember. I know you are hiding
something from me and I am going to
find out pretty quickly what that
is. You can go home for now but I
will watching you. You will be back
in that chair soon and next time I
won't go easy on you. You
understand.

Vic nods his head.

DETECTIVE JONES

Get him out of my sight.

Vic walks out of the room looking relieved and confused with his head sunk low into his chest. Officer Lewis follows behind Vic. Detective Jones stares at Vic with disappointment and disgust as he walks away. The door closes behind Officer Lewis leaving the detective alone in the room.

DETECTIVE JONES

I don't fucking believe this!
Stupid fucking prick! Argh!

As detective Jones loses his temper he kicks at the wall and grabs the chair flinging it across to the other side of the room in an ungraceful rage.

EXT. COUNCIL FLATS, EAST LONDON NIGHT

Vic heads back towards his flat. Cautiously he enters the estate through the back alongside some garages under the cover of the dark sky. He walks with a brisk determination to stay silent and unseen. He slowly creeps up the stairs constantly looking around him in case someone spots him. Sticking tight to the wall he moves in a silent dash towards his. Meticulously he pulls out the single key for the door without jangling the other keys on the loop. Quickly he makes his way inside closing the door tightly behind him making sure that he closes all the deadbolts and places the door latch firmly in place.

INT. VIC'S FLAT NIGHT

Without turning on the lights he stumbles through the rubbish on the floor through to the living room. He sinks into the armchair. The remains of his last bottle of whiskey sits on the side table next to the chair. He grabs the bottle and sinks into the chair. He opens the bottle and begins to put it to his lips. As the bottle rests on his lower lip Vic stops and pauses his motion.

VIC

What am I doing?

Vic takes the bottle away from his lips holding it in front of him and examining it up and down with his eyes.

VIC

(vicious whisper)

I don't need you. What have you
ever done for me? Look where I am

(MORE)

VIC (cont'd)

because of you. I am a fucking mess and for what? What have I achieved? A drunk, a weirdo. They think I am a fucking pervert. A freaky fucking pervert. What have I done? Nothing. I have done nothing but they think I am some bloody kiddie fiddler. I won't have it any more.

Vic gets up out of the chair and walks towards the kitchen. He cracks an empty bottle as he treads on it. The sound of breaking glass only fuels Vic's anger.

VIC

Bloody thing. I won't do this any more. You have given me nothing but grief. I am not going to take it any more. You have taken everything I had away. You fucking prick.

Vic stands over the filthy kitchen sink. He takes the remaining contents of the bottle and pours it down the sink. He watches intently as the clear brown liquid swirls and disappears into the grimy plughole.

VIC

There. I don't need you. I don't need you. You understand? I don't need you.

Vic leans into the sink with his head dipped. He slides down on the floor where he sits up tight against the cupboard door. He stares at the floor. He begins to sob frantically. He holds his hand around his neck feeling the contours and curves of his scars with his fingertips. A short sharp knock is coming from his front door. Vic quickly cuts off his crying.

VIC

Huh?

Vic picks himself up quietly and moves towards the hallway very cautiously. The door knocks again and this time the lock sound louder and more firm.

VIC

(whisper)

Ashley? Ashley. Is that you?

The door knocks again.

VIC
(whisper)
Ashley. If that is you let me know.
Please Ashley, speak to me.

The door knocks again as Vic creeps even closer down the hallway towards the door.

VIC
Please Ashley, just let me know if
that is you.

Vic presses himself up tightly up against the door. The knocking continues with no answer.

VIC
I won't answer till I know who it
is. Please answer me Ashley.
Please.

Suddenly the window in the living room is smashed by a hurling brick. Vic in a state of shock turns his attention to living room and now has his back to front door. The glass crashes and more objects hurtle through into the living. Debris crashes into the furniture and spreads out across the floor.

VIC
(panicking)
What the? No! No! Who is it? What
are you doing? Why are you doing
this? What have I done? What have I
done?

Vic falls down against the front door so that he is sitting in front of it. The knocking now becomes kicks from the outside pounding against the door panel and vibrating through Vic's hunched body.

VIC
(crying)
I was her friend. I didn't take
her. I didn't hurt her.

A number of hooded thugs enter through the smashed living room window. They smash what furniture they can see and thrash out vengeful violence across the room in search of their target Vic.

HOODIE 1
Where the fuck are you you fucking
queer?

HOODIE 2

Come out here now! We ain't fucking about bruv. We are goin to fuck you right up, touching little kids and shit. We are gonna make you pay for that sort of shit.

HOODIE 1

Yeah, we don't want people like you around here on our estate. We gotta protect kids from fucks like you. You fucking nonce! Where are you?!

Vic cowers in the corner. The kicking against the door ceases as the hooded thugs enter through the smashed window frame. They trash the flat, as they spread out through the flat they find Vic shaking by the door.

HOODIE 3

Boys! Over here. The fucker is here man.

HOODIE 1

Lets get that bitch then and bring him in here.

VIC

Why are you here? She was my friend.

The hooded thugs loom towards Vic. Vic quickly gets up and heads towards the thug in front of him. The thug throws a punch and Vic brushes it aside and punches the thug in the jaw throws him up against the wall.

HOODIE 3

You fuck! Argh! I will kill you for that bitch.

Vic grips the thug tightly round the neck. As he applies pressure the other thugs grab Vic and drag him into the living room.

VIC

Get off! get the fuck off me!

HOODIE 1

Shut up punk! We are gonna teach you a lesson. You don't fuck with little girls and you don't fuck with us. You hear me?

The thug kicks Vic hard in his groin as Vic is thrown into the centre of the living room. The thugs stand around him and pin him down as Vic lays in a heap.

HOODIE 2

What are we gonna do to him bruv?

HOODIE 1

We are goin to fuck him up. Make him pay for what he has done. The police shoulda locked you up. You're a real fucking criminal, a real fucking danger to society and all that shit. Shoulda thrown you away you twisted fuck.

VIC

(spitting up)

They let me go cos I haven't done anything. I didn't hurt Ashley. You don't get it. You have it all wrong.

HOODIE 2

We have it wrong? Don't make me laugh bitch. You are a fucking peedo! You get thrills by giving little girls rides in your car. You make me sick.

HOODIE 1

You make all of us sick. We don't ant you here and we are going to make sure it stays that.

The injured thug enters the room carrying a knife he has grabbed from the kitchen. He is holding his jaw in pain.

HOODIE 3

You dare fucking hurt me. You think you can hurt me!

The hoodie grabs Vic's head holds the knife to his throat.

HOODIE 3

I am gonna slice you up prick. Not so big now are you you freak? How did you get those scars anyway? Didn't you mum say to you never play with matches.

VIC

Shut up!

HOODIE 3

Easy or my hand could slip. I don't want to make a mess in your lovely home.

HOODIE 2

Go on. Fucking slice the dirty bastard!

The knife is pulled tighter into Vic's throat.

VIC

Go on then. Fucking do it. Slice my fucking throat. You think you are hard so do it. Cut me up big man. It can't get much worse than this so do it. Go on. Fucking do it. Cut it. Cut it!!!

Vic is held in place and his eyes show a defiance and inevitability about his mortality. The thugs stand around waiting for something to happen. Police sirens in the background suddenly become louder and sound to be closing in on the estate.

HOODIE 1

Oh for fuck sake. Move it.

EXT. OUTSIDE VIC'S FRONT DOOR MORNING

A misty fog descends upon the council estate. Frost has formed on the ground. Ashley is stood silently outside the door to Vic's flat. She is prevented from stepping any farther as two police officers are protecting the door.

ASHLEY

(under her breath)

Vic?

INT. VIC'S FLAT MORNING

The living room resembles a wasteland scattered with rubbish and debris. Bricks and large rocks are spread across the floor. In the centre of the living room lies a pool of blood. The blood stain has a large void in the middle where a body used to be. Police and investigators are spread around the flat taking photographs and attempting to collect evidence in the intricate mess. Spray-painted words on the walls include "Sicko", "Perv" and "Nonce."

EXT. OUTSIDE VIC'S FRONT DOOR MORNING

Ashley continues to stare on in horror at the flat.

ASHLEY
(whisper)
Vic. Where are you Vic? What's
happened?

Ashley approaches the officers.

ASHLEY
What happened? Where's Vic? Please
tell me what happened?

OFFICER 1
Sorry madam but we cannot discuss
what has taken place. Could you
please step away from this area.

ASHLEY
What happened? Tell me what went
on. I am his friend. I want to know
if he is OK.

OFFICER 1
Madam, if you don't move away from
here you will be escorted. Please
step way.

Ashley moves closer in trying to fight past the officers.
The officers grab her as she pushes forward.

ASHLEY
Let me go! I need to know if he is
OK! Let go of me now! Vic is my
friend. He is my friend! Get off
me!

OFFICER 1
Madam I am going to have to take
you away. Please restrain yourself.

Ashley is being dragged away from the flat by the officers.
She is screaming as they take her.

ASHLEY
Vic! Vic! Let me go! Vic! Vic! Get
off! Vic!

EXT. WASTELAND DUMP SITE

A waste-truck reverse in to a stinking mound of rubbish. The stench is revolting. in the damp conditions. Rats and other creatures infest the area. The truck continues to reverse until it is ready to tip out it's load. As the back of the truck lifts the waste pours out rapidly. Once the truck is finished it pulls away. Left in the mess is a recognisable shape. Vic's body lies surrounded by waste, he is limp and lifeless. Stab wounds are evident on his neck and chest. His clothes are bloodied. His lifeless body sinks into the rotting waste.

END