

# **HELICOPTER**

**DRAFT 7**

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**By Angela Betzien**

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*Mother hovers over me like a helicopter.*

**From *Between Parent and Teenager*, Dr Haim Ginott, 1969.**

*They hid in the grass from helicopter gun ships and were attacked by wild animals in the night. Of 30,000 who began the trek, only 11,000 survived. **The Lost Boys of Sudan** foundation website.*

**Characters**

**She, 40**

**He, 40, married to She.**

**Jack is their 14 year old son.**

**Alice is their 2 year old daughter.**

**Thomas is a 25 year old African man who lives next door.**

**Three boys from Jack's private school.**

**Australia's Got Talent Judges**

**These characters are played by the other actors .**

**Scene**

*Darkness.*

*An African man stands alone.*

*He speaks in his own language.*

Thomas        Listen to me.  
                   Listen  
                   to  
                   me.  
                   Hear  
                   me.  
                   Hear my voice.  
                   Hear my story.  
                   It will give you nightmares.  
                   I am a survivor.  
                   I survive so that I can tell my story.  
                   This is my dream.  
                   This is my destiny.  
                   Listen to my story.

*Light reveals he is cradling an African toy.*

*An African woman's grief stricken cries.*

*A helicopter.*

*The sound of the helicopter intensifies until it is deafening.*

*Perhaps the sound morphs into a domestic sound.*

*Light.*

*A white room.*

*An affluent home in a Western city.*

*A cage on a small section of manicured grass contains a white rabbit.*

**Scene**

*He is staring into space.*

*She enters with scotch bottle and two glasses.*

She                We'll have to get a new X5.

*He is wrenched back to reality.*

He           What?

She           We can't keep the old one.

He           It's brand new.

(She          We'll get the optional extra of the rear tracking this time.

He           I'm keeping my car.

*She*          We've learnt our lesson.

He           There's nothing wrong with my car.

She          Oh god  
we've learnt it the hard way.

He           It's not a pit bull.  
It's not an animal that has to be destroyed.)

She          And we'll get counselling.  
Yes.  
Yes.  
We'll all see a therapist.

He           Will we?

She          We're at risk of post-traumatic stress.

He           I'll be fine.

She          I'm calling our therapist.

He           I'm not seeing a therapist.

She          If it goes to court ...

He           It's not going to court.

She          If it does...

He           It won't.

She          But if it does  
god forbid  
if it does...

*Pause.*

He           What?

*Pause*

She           It'll look better if you talked.

He           Do you think?

She           Much better if you've opened up...

He           Really?

She           ...expressed yourself.  
all the emotional stress...  
Yes?

*Pause.*

He           Call the therapist.

She           I will  
first thing in the morning.

*Silence*

*He goes into a zone.*

*She reaches out and touches him, he jumps.*

She           Are you..?

He           What?

*Pause*

She           We have to tell him.

He           Do we?

She           Oh god.

He           Why do we have to tell him?

She           He'll find out anyway.

He           He might not.

She           We could be on the news.  
Our house our car our driveway our street.

He            He doesn't watch the news.  
Who watches the news?

She            Some people watch the news.

He            Who?

She            Well not you.

He            No news is good news.

She            It's important to stay informed to stay alert.

He            We could wait we could tell him later.

She            Oh god his exams are coming up.

He            That's right.  
He doesn't need the stress.

She            Oh god.  
There'll be an investigation.

*He pops a pill and pours two drinks.*

She            There'll be a court case.

*He holds out his hands, he sees that they are shaking.*

She            A process.

*He goes to pops another pill.*

(She            That's enough.  
Don't you think?)

*He glares at her pops it anyway.*

She            We'll tell him it was an accident.

He            It was.

She            That's what we'll tell him.  
We'll tell him it was no one's fault.

He            It wasn't.

She            We'll tell him these things happen to people every single day.

He Don't tell him that.

She Why not?  
It's true.  
It's the truth.  
That's why we have to be hyper vigilant.

*She hears Jack.*

Here he is.  
He's home.

*Jack, 14 enters in private school uniform.*

Jack Where's the X5?  
It's not in the drive.

She We have to tell him.

Jack Tell me what?

*Pause.*

He Fine.

*He pours another drink.*

She We love you.  
You know that.

*She hugs Jack.*

Jack Mum.  
My hair.  
Mum.  
Mum.

*She releases him.*

She Have you eaten today?

Jack Yeh.

She What have you eaten today?

Jack My lunch.

She All of it?

Jack Yes.



She           Is that the truth?

Jack          Yes.

*Silence as She stares at him.*

(She          We trust you.  
              You know that Jack.  
              We totally totally trust you.  
              You know that.

Jack          Yes.)

She          You know that we love you and your sister so so much and we won't  
              ever let anything bad happen to either of you.  
              You know that?

Jack          Yeh.

He            Can we get this over with?

She          I'm preparing him.

He            Right.

She          And we're available to you twenty-four seven.  
              Whenever you need us.

*Jack receives a text.*

*He reads it.*

*He's thrilled about it.*

Jack          Yes.  
              Can I go now?

He            Would you turn that off for a minute?

Jack          I've got... chess.

He            Just sit down for a minute Jack.

Jack          Why?

He            Just sit.

*Silence.*

Jack            Are you pissed?

He/She        No.

Jack            You are.

He              We had a scotch.

She             A small scotch.

Jack            In the afternoon?

She             Listen we need to tell you something.  
We need to explain why we couldn't pick you up from school this  
afternoon.

Jack            Cos you're both tanked.

She             We are not drunk Jack we are never drunk.

Jack            What about your 40<sup>th</sup>?  
~~You spewed in the pool and she passed out on the toilet.~~

He              Jack shut up and listen/ for once.

*She glares at He.*

She            Dad.  
It's all right Jack.  
Dad didn't mean to snap.  
Did you Dad?

He              No.

She             Dad's had an awful day.

Jack            Did you get the sack?

He              No I did not.

She             Darling we have something to tell you.

Jack            You're getting divorced.

She             Why would you say that?

*Jack shrugs.*

She            Why would he say that?  
Why would you say that?

Jack            Everyone else's parents are getting divorced.

She            No.  
                  No we're not.  
                  That's never ever going to happen to us.  
                  Is it?

He            No.

She            We've made a vow to you and your sister.

Jack            Has something happened to Alice?

She            Oh god no  
                  Jack no darling  
                  your sister is just fine.  
                  She's safe and sound at day care.

Jack            What then?

*Silence.*

*He starts to dry wretch.*

*Jack and She stare at him.*

*He leaves the room suddenly.*

Jack            What?

She            Darling.  
                  There's been a terrible terrible accident...

### **Scene**

She            The world is a dangerous place.  
                  The home, the average domestic household is actually a war zone.  
                  There are pools.  
                  There are chemicals.  
                  There are very nasty pool chemicals in the shed, under the sink.  
                  There are cars and stoves and knives and power points and mowers and  
                  flushing toilets.  
                  Did you know that children can drown in toilets?  
                  Children can drown in water features.  
                  Children can drown in a bucket of water.  
                  There are the eyes from soft toys that can choke a child under three in a  
                  split second.  
                  There are swing sets and treadmills.  
                  A child was strangled by the safety chord on a treadmill.

A child was scalped when her hair got stuck in a treadmill.  
 There are peanut allergies and bee allergies and slippery surfaces and  
 hot irons and toxic paints.  
 I don't believe in God.  
 I don't believe in God so I can't pray that bad things won't happen to  
 me, to my family. I can only avoid risk. I do that by purchasing safe  
 products like the bugaboo pram with its automatic locking function and  
 grow bags (which have been proven to reduce the risks of SIDS by  
 thirty percent).

*Pause.*

So I'm a helicopter parent.  
 I admit it.  
 I'm friendly.  
 I'm a friendly helicopter.  
 I'm not the enemy.  
 God.  
 I'm more like the Red Cross in Africa dropping in supplies whenever  
 there's a crisis.

## **Scene**

*The three actors playing She, He and Thomas enter wearing private school blazers.*

*The three boys surround Jack.*

Jack            Hi  
                   sorry I'm late.  
                   My rents you know.  
                   This  
                   crazy  
                   fucking  
                   shit happened today.  
                   You wouldn't believe it.

Boy 1           Jack

Jack            It's like totally horror central at my house right now.

Boy 1           Jack

Jack            so  
                   sorry  
                   yeah  
                   sorry I'm late  
                   hi

Boy 1 Jack

Jack sorry

Boy 1 Relax.

Jack I'm relaxed.

Boy 1 No Jack  
your balls have shrunk to the size of peanut M and M's.

Bully 3 Oh man I could go some peanut M.M.'s.

Boy 1 You're probably wondering why you got that text?  
Why we asked you here this afternoon?

Jack Yeah.

Boy 2 You have been carefully selected by us  
from among hundreds of other grade nines.

Jack Really?

Boy 1 Few are chosen.

Boy 3 It's a great honour.

Boy 2 You are very special Jack.

Boy 1 Very very special.

Jack Awesome.

Boy 3 You see we young men have lost our way in this globalised world.

Jack Yeah right.

Boy 1 We need rituals through which we can express our masculinity.

Jack Totally.

Boy 1 To establish our hierarchy.

Jack Yeah.

Boy 1 As young men we are hormonally driven to take risks.  
It's in our nature.  
Right?

Jack Right.

- Boy 1 I just want to clarify.  
You can walk away right now.  
You have a choice.
- Jack No it's cool.  
I'm up for it.  
Yeah.  
Whatever.  
Totally.
- Boy 3 Sign here.
- Jack What's this?
- Boy 2 Just a small disclaimer.  
In this litigious climate  
we need to cross all our legal t's and dot all our legal i's.
- Boy 1 I drafted it in legal studies.
- Boy 3 Cos you remember what happened last year?
- Jack What?
- Boy 1 Year nine boy.  
Red head with the glasses.
- Boy 2 Tried to sue my rents for perforating his ear drum.  
And it was his fault.
- Boy 3 How was it his fault again?
- Boy 2 I was aiming for his balls.  
If he hadn't ducked I wouldn't have hit his ear drum.  
Would I?
- Boy 1 Who would have thought an egg could do so much damage?
- Boy 3 He screamed like a girl.
- Boy 2 Blood pissed everywhere.
- Boy 3 Like a fucking fountain.
- Boy 1 Little dickwad dobbed.
- Boy 2 You wouldn't do that would you Jack?
- Jack Duck?

Boy 2        Dob Jack.  
                  You wouldn't dob?

Jack         No.  
                  No way.  
                  Never.

Boy 2        That's a good sprog.

Boy 1        Cos like if you did  
                  you're dead  
                  you know that?

*Jack nods.*

Boy 2        Anyway we've made some structural changes since then.

Boys 3        That won't happen again.

Boy 2        Ok that's all the paper work out of the way.

Boy 1        Right  
                  lets get started then.

*Boy 3 finds his phone and starts filming.*

Jack         Hey?

Boy 1        Oh we're filming this.  
                  Didn't we mention that?

Jack         No.

Boy 1        You have to trust us Jack.  
                  You have to totally trust us.

*Jack nods.*

*The boys pull out a pair of rubber surgical gloves and throw them at Jack.*

Boy 2        You'll be needing these.

*Jack picks them.*

## **Scene**

*She and He are in bed.*

*She is brushing her hair, repetitively, absently.*

She            It was an accident waiting to happen.  
                  She was always playing on the street.  
                  I've been a nervous wreck about that since we moved in.  
                  I suppose they're just used to a lot more space in Africa.  
                  We have to respect their free range parenting styles.  
                  They're new here.  
                  We have to make them feel welcome.  
                  Smile at them.  
                  Wave.  
                  I do that every morning.  
                  I always wave.

*He's zoned out, staring at his I pad.*

She            What are you watching?

He            Wolf Creek.

*They both watch the I pad impassively for a few moments.*

*The sound of screaming and mutilation.*

*She has a thought.*

She            I know this has been an awful/awful week.

He            I don't want to talk about it.

She            No right let's not.

*Pause.*

She            I just want to/say...

He            I'd rather/

She            This is going to sound terrible...  
                  No I shouldn't say it.  
                  I shouldn't say it.  
                  Goodnight.

He            Good night.

*Silence*

She            No I'll say it.  
                  I will say it.



I think it needs to be said.  
To clear the air.  
You know how I've always had that feeling.

He Yes.

She That feeling of....

He Doom.

She Yes a feeling of doom of dread.

He It's your Generalised Anxiety Disorder.

She I've had an intuition that something bad was going to happen to us since the day we moved in here.

He There's drugs for that.

She I took the drugs.  
I took the drugs but it didn't go away.  
The feeling remained.  
The feeling that our life was just... just too perfect, you know?  
That something would happen, some terrible unspeakable evil some godforsaken terror was going to swoop down from above like a... like a... vulture and just destroy us.  
What if this is it?  
What if today's event, today's terrible tragedy was what I was sensing all this time?

He Speak to your doctor about upping the dose.

She No listen to me listen to me.  
They've come all this way  
such a long way  
and this happens next door.  
And I feel... I feel... more at ease now... than I've felt in... years.  
Oh god how awful.  
That sounds terrible doesn't it?

*He is silent.*

She I tell you what.  
I'm not going to kick this gift horse in the mouth.  
No.  
I am going to change.  
We are going to change from now on.  
We are going to *give back*.  
All of us.  
Starting tomorrow.

He            That's great.

*She pulls down her eye mask.*

She            Are you all right?

He            I'm fine.

She            Are you sure?

He            I just want to go to sleep.

She            Good night.

*She turns out the light.*

He            Good night.

*He stares vacantly at the screen on the I pad.*

*Sounds of horror.*

*Jack appears wearing pyjamas in the door way of his parent's bedroom.*

Jack            Mum?  
Mum?  
Dad?

She            Darling?  
What's wrong?

He            Jack it's the middle of the fucking night.

*She switches on the bedside lamp.*

Jack            I cut myself.

She            What?

Jack            I cut myself mum mum I cut myself.

*She leaps out of bed.*

She            Oh god he's cut himself oh god oh god he's cut himself again.

*To He.*

She            God he's sensitive.

He            Oh for fuck's sake.

*We hear the cries of the baby through the monitor.*

He            Great now Alice is awake.

*She smothers Jack.*

She            It's going to be all right  
                 my darling boy.  
                 Everything is going to be all right.

### Scene

*Jack is looking at his finger. It has a small bandaid on it.*

Jack            It's always an option. Yeah I mean I think about it. Sure. I toy with the idea. I liked doing it. Don't know why. Ok yes actually I do know why. It was about my need to control. Whatever. I really liked it when they didn't know what was wrong with me, when I was loosing all that weight. It was brilliant when they thought I had cancer. I got to skip school all the time. They took me to see all these doctors. She totally flipped out that year. She got a stomach ulcer and her hair started to fall out. She got, what's it called Alopecia. She totally looked like Sigourney Weaver in Aliens. He... The Zombie started popping pills. You should see his medicine cabinet. It's a fucking pharmacy. I didn't have anorexia nervosa. That's what emo ballerinas with vomit breath get. I decided to stop eating because I thought it would be fun. I was right. Finally they figured it out and took me to a specialist. They shoved tubes down my throat and force fed me. In the end it was just easier to eat like a total loser. But yeah it's always an option.  
I could stop eating anytime.  
Anytime  
I  
want.

### Scene

*He pops a Zanex pill as she enters dragging a pile of soft toys into the room and dumps them.*

*She goes out and she brings in more, dumps them.*

*She goes out again and brings in more.*

*There is now a mountain of soft toys in the room.*

He            What's all this?

She I was at IKEA.

He What were you doing at IKEA again?  
Didn't we have this discussion?

She I was there looking for a new lounge suite.

He We need a new lounge suite?

She Yes we do we need a new suite.

He Do we, do we really need a new suite?

She The old one is covered in baby vomit.

He Right/ so.

She So I was browsing the suites when I saw this sign.  
For every soft toy sold, IKEA are giving one dollar to UNICEF.

He You could have just given the money to UNICEF.  
You didn't have to buy the toys.

She It's symbolic.  
Every toy sold means a dollar for UNICEF.

He Right.  
Well they're taking up space.

She Alice can play with them.

He All of them?

She And I want them as a reminder to us.

He A reminder of what?

She Every toy symbolizes an African child.  
This one and this one and this one and this one.  
How cute is this one?

He How many did you buy?

She There's more in the car.

He How many?

She The rest are being delivered later today.

He            How much did that cost?

She            Oh a thousand or so.  
Nothing.

He            It's not nothing.  
One thousand dollars is not nothing.

She            Did you know that thirty thousand children under the age of five die in  
Africa every day?

He            No I didn't.

She            Malaria alone kills three thousand African children every day.  
These are preventable diseases.

He            What are you saying?

She            These are diseases which could be cured with modern medicine.

He            Oh I see.

She            One child dies in the world every three seconds.  
One, two, three, dead.  
One, two, three, dead.

He            All right.

She            One, two, three, another one.

He            I get the picture.

He            One, two...

He            You're mocking me.

She            What?

He            I suppose you think we should just give the drugs to Africa?  
Hand them out like lollies?

She            Yes actually.

He            Drop them from Helicopters?

She            Yes why not?

He            Everything costs money.  
Human life has a price.

She           How can you say that?

He            That's how the world works honey.  
              You know we invest a lot of money into researching those drugs.

She           We?

He            Yes Zantrack  
              The company I work for.  
              The company that paid for this house.

She           Excuse me?

He            Our five star safety rated all terrain vehicle.

She           Excuse me.

He            That twenty thousand dollar child proof pool cover.

She           I paid for this house too.  
              I worked right up until I had Alice remember?

He            That three thousand dollar bugaboo pram.

She           I paid for half of this house.

He            That new non-toxic organic bio fucking degradable lounge suite.

She           We needed a new suite.

He            All these soft toys.

She           I paid for those on my Visa.

He            Where were they made anyway?

*He checks the tag on one.*

              Ah China.  
              Made by children in China.  
              Good one.

She           I am doing my best to care.  
              I have made a difference today.

He            Oh right  
              so you'll sleep easy at night and I won't?

She           You never sleep easy at night.  
              Wonder why.

He           What is that supposed to mean?

She           Nothing.

He           I'll never sleep again because of what happened?

*Pause*

He           It wasn't my fault.

*Silence.*

### **Scene**

*It's dark in the house.*

*The Ikea toys make strange shadows on the walls.*

*He and She are listening to the sound of a very loud party next door.*

*It's the wake for the little girl next door.*

*They listen in stricken silence for some time.*

She           Come to bed.

He           With that next door?

She           Take a pill.

*He takes one.*

He           It's been going since yesterday afternoon.

She           Could go for days  
              weeks.

He           They could turn the volume down at least.

She           I'm going to bed.

*She exits and He sits up glaring into the dark.*

### **Scene**

She           I was feeding the rabbit when I saw him  
              I saw him standing there in the front yard  
              and at first, just for a split second my heart skipped a beat

to see/

He I can't believe he just entered our property...

She Oh god isn't that terrible?  
That's terrible.

He removed the child safety lock...

She But then...

He opened our gate...

She I saw that he was so nicely dressed.

He walked right onto our private property...

She Very well ironed trousers clean white shirt.

He uninvited.

She Brilliantly white.

He You don't do that.

She I wanted to ask him how he gets his whites so bright.

He You don't do that anymore.  
It's rude.

She He was very polite.

He It's trespass is what it is.

She He stood there so politely  
smiling.

He Is he the father?

She He's the Uncle.  
She was his sister's child.

He I see.  
And what did he want?

She Nothing.

He He must have wanted something.

She No no all he wanted was to extend his hand to me.



He He wanted to extend his hand?

She in peace... on behalf of the family.

He In peace?  
Is that what he said?

She Yes that's what he said.

He Sounds like a very formal thing to say.

She Yes they have a very formal way of speaking.

He And did you?  
Did you shake his hand?

She Yes.  
And his hand was soft.  
He has very soft hands.

He Has he?

She They're from Uganda.

He Are they?

She Did you know that?

He No.

She I didn't know that.  
Obviously I knew they were from Africa.  
I knew that.  
I didn't know they were from there.  
It's war torn you know.  
Child soldiers...  
Joseph Kony...

He Who?

She Oh god haven't you even heard of Joseph Kony?

He No I haven't.

She Where have you been?

He I've been right here.

She Kony 2012?

He's gone viral on the internet.

He I've no idea who you're talking about.

She The monster from Uganda?

He Right.

She That's why they're here.  
Next door.  
You know war has a lot to answer for.

*Pause.*

He So you're sure he didn't want anything?

She Yes.  
Only...

He What?

She He wanted to know why we weren't at the wake.

He What?  
That?  
As if...  
Why would we...  
Anyway we weren't invited.

She He said the whole street was welcome.

He Oh right.  
How were we supposed to know that?  
So he didn't want anything else?

She Just to put our minds at rest.

He Put our "minds at rest"?

She That's their culture.

He It's actually their fault.

She What a wonderful culture.

He It'll all come out in the investigation.

She He really was a lovely young man.

He Child protection will probably get involved.

It's neglect letting a three year old roam the streets.

She            So I've asked him for dinner.

He            You what?

### **Scene**

*She, He, Thomas and Jack occupy the space.*

*Thomas is dressed formally in a clean white shirt and carefully ironed trousers.*

*A long silence.*

Thomas        This is a very nice house.

She            Thank you.  
                  Thank you Thomas.  
                  We designed it ourselves actually.  
                  Well, we worked in very close consultation with the architect.

Thomas        It is very big.

She            It's deceptively large.

Thomas        Very very big.

She/He        It appears larger than it really is.

Thomas        How many bedrooms?

She            Six.

Thomas        Six bedrooms?

She            One's a study.

Thomas        How many bathrooms?

She            Four.

Thomas        Four bathrooms?

She            Well, three and a half technically.  
                  One of them only has a shower not a bath/ so

Thomas        Four bathrooms and how many people?

She            Three.

Well four including the baby.  
She's twenty-three months.

Thomas Mmmm.  
Yes.  
It is a very big house.  
I like it.  
It is very... white.

He It's cream actually.  
Java cream.

Thomas Java really?  
Dutch right?

He I don't know anything about that.  
It's just the name of the colour ok.

Thomas It looks white.

He Yes well maybe but it's listed in the Dulux catalogue under cream.

Thomas Oh but it looks white.

He "Choosing the perfect shade of cream is an exercise in subtlety."

*Pause.*

He Something I read in a magazine.

*Pause.*

She You should have seen the state of this place before we moved in.  
We saw it as a challenge.  
Extreme Reno.  
Like the show.  
You know?

He Plus we knew house prices in the area were set to sky rocket/Almost  
bought two... didn't we?

She Almost.  
Yes.

He One to live in and one to renovate for later...

She Of course it was a nightmare when it was being built.  
Took twelve months.  
We had to leave  
Live elsewhere.

Thomas        Like refugees.

She            Yes well no...  
but it really was a nightmare.  
Wasn't it?

He             Nightmare.

Thomas        Ah yes I remember this time.

She            Oh you do?

Thomas        We were here first.

He             What's that?

Thomas        We were here first.

He             I thought you said you were from Africa?

Thomas        Yes my family is from Uganda.  
What I mean is  
we were here in this street before your family arrived.

He             Right.

She            Yes.  
Of course you were.

He             You and your family own or..?

Thomas        We are renting.

He             Right.

She            You've been living next door for a while then?

Thomas        Yes since Acanit was born.

*Stricken silence.*

She            Acanit Thomas's/ niece.

He             Yes.  
Yes I know.

*Silence.*

Thomas        Acanit was born in that house.

She Really?

Thomas Yes.  
Acanit was the first of our family to be born in this country.

She Oh.

*Silence.*

She No... complications?  
You know during the labour.  
No problems?

Thomas Yes my sister nearly died.  
Acanit did not want to be born.  
We think she wanted to stay in the other world.  
My sister pushed and pushed for three whole days.  
Until finally she fell out  
my sister caught her with her own hands.  
That is why my sister called her daughter Acanit.  
It means hard times.

*Silence*

She It's very popular these days.  
Home birth.  
Personally I wouldn't take the risk  
but that's just me.

*He stares at Thomas.*

*Thomas is smiling.*

Thomas My mother gave birth to me under a tree very near to a pride of lions.

She Oh my god really?

Thomas No  
not really.  
I am just joking.

*Pause.*

She Jack.  
Why don't you give Thomas "the tour" while we're waiting for  
dinner?

Jack Of what?

She            Show Thomas Bunnykins.  
                   The children have a pet rabbit.  
                   It's pregnant.  
                   It's going to give birth any day now.  
                   We're very excited.  
                   Aren't we?

Jack            No.

She            I just believe it's so important for the children to witness the cycles of  
                   life.

Thomas        And death.

She            Yes.

*Pause.*

                  Jack.

*Jack doesn't move.*

                  Show him the pool then  
                   the games room.

*Silence*

He            Jack just do it.

*Jack sullenly gets up and stomps away.*

*He stops.*

Jack            Follow me.

**Scene**

*The games room, downstairs.*

Jack            So this is the games room.  
                   It's like  
                   full of games and shit.

*Perhaps the games room is where the Ikea toys are.*

Jack            My little sister's dumb crap.

*Jack kicks one of the Ikea toys.*

*Thomas and Jack stand in silence.*

Jack            So have you heard of XBOX?

Thomas        Yes  
I've heard of XBOX.

*Pause.*

Jack            Can you play it?

Thomas        Why don't we see?

Jack            What game?

*Thomas picks up a game, reads it.*

Thomas        This one.

*Pause.*

Jack            Resident Evil 5.  
That's my Dad's absolute favourite game ever.  
It's really hard if you're a beginner...

Thomas        I will try.

Jack            It's set in Africa you know.

Thomas        Really?

Jack            Yeah.

Thomas        Then I should feel at home.

Jack            So we're investigating a bio-organic terrorist threat in the desert ok?  
And we have to kill all the locals that have been infected by parasites  
and turned into Majini.

Thomas        Evil spirits.

Jack            Huh?

Thomas        Majini are evil spirits in Swahili.

*Pause.*

*Jack stares at Thomas.*

Jack            Right... so anyway the Majini are really evil and they've got weapons  
like handguns, assault rifles, submachine guns...



There's one there.  
Get it.

*Jack and Thomas play.*

*They become very involved and aggressive.*

*The sound of video game war fare.*

*Thomas wins the game.*

Thomas        Yes!

*Thomas is laughing.*

Jack            You've played it before haven't you?

*Thomas laughs.*

*Silence*

Jack            Do you wanna see the pregnant rabbit?  
                  It's obese.  
                  It's like the biggest loser.

### **Scene**

*Thomas, Jack, She and He are all seated at a table eating.*

She            So it's organic grass fed beef in scallion caper green sauce with a side  
                  of brocollini in medeira wine juice.

*Pause.*

She            To neighbours.

All            neighbours.

She            Everybody needs good neighbours.

He            With a little understanding...

*Thomas is silent.*

*He doesn't pick up his knife and fork.*

*He is waiting.*

*They wait for him.*

*A long silence.*

*He glares at She.*

*He mouths "What?" to She.*

He            So  
                  Thomas  
                  what footy team do you barrack for?

*Thomas looks directly at He.*

Thomas       In my culture when something very bad happens it must be dealt with.  
                  Like a wound to the flesh it must be washed clean or it will infect all  
                  our spirits.

*Pause.*

Thomas       Many terrible things have happened to me but I have survived. I have  
                  learned to be strong and to survive.

*Pause*

Thomas       Let me tell you my story.

*Pause*

*He panics, looking for an escape route.*

She            Yes yes of course.  
                  Jack.  
                  Jack.

Jack          What?

She            Earphones out please.

*Jack pulls one ear out.*

She            Both of them.

*Jack rips the other out.*

She            Thank you.

Thomas       In Uganda  
                  there is a very very bad war.

She            Oh yes.  
                  I did know that.  
                  We did know that didn't we?

*He looks blank.*

He            No.  
                  I didn't.  
                  I don't watch the news that much.  
                  It's all pretty negative.  
                  Sort of  
                  doom and gloom  
                  you know?

*Thomas stares at He.*

Thomas        When I was twelve years old only a few years younger than your son  
                  the militia attacked my village. Helicopters came and men on horses.  
                  They were shooting at us from the helicopters and from the horses. We  
                  all ran in every direction trying to hide. My brother. My sisters. My  
                  cousins. My father. My mother. My Aunties. Some climbed trees to try  
                  to escape but they were shot. They fell from the trees like rotten fruit.

He            I'm sorry, excuse me.  
                  Was that Alice's monitor?

*Silence as everyone listens.*

He            No?  
                  No.  
                  Sorry.  
                  Go on.

Thomas        I ran and I ran. I was a good runner. I hid inside a metal tank. Through  
                  a small hole I could see everything from where I was hiding. I saw my  
                  mother and aunties raped and shot. I saw my brothers and my sisters  
                  slaughtered one by one. I stayed hidden inside this tank. I could hardly  
                  move. I was too afraid to come out in case I was shot. After two days  
                  and two nights I came out. There was nobody left. Only the bodies.  
                  Only the smell. Only the flies.

*Silence*

He            Well/ that's really...

Thomas        So I began to walk. I walked and I walked and I walked. After many  
                  days I met other children whose families had been slaughtered also.  
                  We walked together. It was safer this way. We hid in the grass when  
                  the helicopters came. At night we slept in the forest. We could see  
                  nothing. Everything was black. We could hear the wild animals in the

forest. We were very afraid. Many nights a lion would come. It would crash through the forest and lift a boy up like a doll in its strong jaws and carry him away into the dark. On these nights none of us would sleep for the sound of the lion tearing this boy to pieces.

*Silence.*

*Everyone has stopped eating.*

*They are staring at Thomas.*

*Jack is staring at Thomas in awe.*

Jack            That. Is. Awesome.

She             Jack.

*Pause.*

Thomas        After a very long time I arrived at a refugee camp where I was reunited with my sister.  
We spent seven years in this camp.  
Then we came to this country.  
We felt very lucky.  
We had survived.  
Here we were safe at last.

*Pause*

She             That is so inspiring.

Thomas        My niece Acanit was a very special little girl.  
We miss her very much.  
She was always smiling.  
She was always laughing.

*Thomas stares at He*

Wasn't she?

She             Yes.  
Yes she was.  
Thomas we are / so...

He              So Thomas what do you want to do in this country?

*Thomas continues to stare at He.*

Thomas        I would like to help people

She            That's so wonderful.

Thomas        Yes I would like to help weak people.  
I would like to be a life coach and personal trainer.  
I believe I have the experience to teach people how to survive.

Jack            You can be my personal trainer.  
Can he mum can he personally train me?  
She'll pay you.

She            Well... I suppose so if Thomas is available.  
We would pay you.

*Thomas looks Jack up and down.*

Thomas        All right.

Jack            Yes!

Thomas        There are so many weak people in this country.  
I ask myself.  
Why are they so weak?  
What is wrong with them?

### **Scene**

*Thomas is leaving.*

*He and She whisper.*

He            Whatever you do don't say sorry.

She            What?

He            If you say sorry you're admitting fault  
it's like pleading guilty.  
It'll open up a whole can of legal worms.  
Before we know it we'll be paying compensation.

She            Compensation?

He            For their pain and suffering.  
Pain and suffering are very very expensive.  
We could loose our house.

She            Oh god no.  
Really?

He            Yes really.  
They could sue us they could take our home.

She But it was an accident.  
A terrible accident.

He That's right.  
Of course it was.  
It wasn't our fault.  
So do not say sorry.  
All right?

She Yes yes all right.  
We have to do something  
offer them something.

He Do we?

She Yes of course we do.  
We have to help them.  
You know without insulting them.

He Fine.  
Whatever.  
Just don't say the s word or we'll be sleeping on the street.

*They return to Thomas.*

She Thomas how much?  
For the personal training for Jack.

Thomas I charge eighty dollars an hour.

He /Eighty?

She We'll pay twice that.  
Now Jack's got flute on Monday  
debating on Tuesday and chess on Wednesday.  
What about Thursday at four o'clock?

*Thomas thinks.*

Thomas I can only do Wednesday.

She Jack can skip chess this term.  
He really needs to build his self-confidence Thomas  
that's the main thing.  
He was born premature you know.

Thomas Yes I see that he is like dough that has not been cooked properly in the  
oven.

She           Right.  
 And whenever your family want to use the pool or the basket ball court  
 they're welcome.  
 There's the gym, the sauna, the spa, the games room.  
 Our house is your house.

He           Figuratively speaking.

*She glares at him.*

She           You tell your family that.  
 Tell your sister won't you?

Thomas      Yes I will.

She           It's the least we can do.

Thomas      Yes.

*She leaves.*

*Thomas and He stand in silence for a long time.*

He           Come on  
 just say it.  
 Are you suing us?

Thomas      No.

He           You've seen a lawyer haven't you?  
 You have haven't you?

Thomas      No we have not.

He           Come on who wouldn't see a lawyer in the circumstances?  
 I have I'll tell you that now.  
 A very very good one.  
 We're just waiting.  
 Waiting for the first move.

*Silence*

Thomas      The death of my niece was an accident.

He           Yes thank you.  
 I know that.

*Pause.*

Come on you must want something.

Thomas        What would you want?

He             What?

Thomas        If I had done this to your child  
what would you want from me?

He             I'd want...  
I would want to hurt you.  
I would want to make you pay.

Thomas        Kwetu dia hailali, si kondo.

He             What does that mean?

Thomas        Fear not.  
Revenge does not sleep in our house.

*Pause*

He             I see.

Thomas        Good night.

*Thomas walks away, stops and turns.*

Thomas        Oh I nearly forgot.

*Thomas presents an African toy to He*

Thomas        It was my niece's doll.

He             Thank you but  
no.

Thomas        It is a gift.

He             Alice has truckloads of toys  
really...

*Thomas continues to offer the toy.*

Thomas        My sister would like your daughter to have it.

*He reluctantly takes it.*

(He             Thank  
you. )



*Thomas leaves.*

*He is left holding the toy at arms length.*

*It stares at him.*

### **Scene**

He                    Reversing is a breeze in the X5.  
                          The handling is second to none.  
                          No surprises the X5 won best luxury four-wheel drive three years in a  
                          row.  
                          Stability control, seven-speed dual clutch transmission, ABS breaks  
                          not to mention a five star ANCAP rating.  
                          With its suite of airbags for all occupants...  
                          That's why we invested.  
                          Peace of mind.  
                          All I heard was a feint crack.  
                          A cracking sound like plastic.  
                          So I reverse onto the street and that's when I see the pink scooter in the  
                          drive.  
                          Broken.  
                          Crushed.  
                          Alice has a purple scooter.  
                          Alice's scooter is purple.  
                          This scooter is pink.  
                          And I'm trying to think I'm trying to compute this when I see...  
                          I think it's a doll.  
                          That's the first thing I think.  
                          Then I see that it's  
                          a girl lying there in the drive  
                          It's a small child.

### *Pause*

I try to get out of the car.  
 I can't move my legs.  
 My legs are jelly.  
 There's something wrong with my legs.  
 I reach her somehow  
 somehow I check her pulse.

### *Silence*

The imprint of the tyres...  
 Bridgestone Dueler A.T.'s  
 The X5 is an all terrain vehicle.  
 1730 kg of steal.  
 I know the specs because I did my market research.  
 So her head is

her head is  
flat.

*Darkness except for a spot on the African toy.*

### Scene

*The home gym.*

Thomas        Twenty push ups.

Jack            Twenty?  
That's impossible.

Thomas        Go.  
Go  
Go.  
Why aren't you moving?

Jack            Can you show me first?

*Thomas drops to the floor and pumps out twenty push ups.*

*Jack notices Thomas's gym bag. He peers into it. He pulls out Thomas's shirt, smells it, drops it back in the bag.*

*He looks further into the bag and pulls out a flyer.*

Jack            What's this?

*Jack holds up an Australia's Got Talent flyer/form.*

Jack            Are you auditioning for Australia's Got Talent?

Thomas        No.

Jack            You are.  
You totally are.  
Are you a rapper?

Thomas        Give that to me.

*Thomas snatches the form from Thomas and puts it back in his bag.*

Jack            Are you like a gangster rapper?

Thomas        No.

Jack            What do you do then?  
Can you sing?

Can you sing R and B?  
Are you like an acrobat or something?

Thomas Be quiet.

Jack Can I see your act before you audition?

Thomas No.

Jack Why not?

Thomas Your turn.

Jack Why not?

Thomas 20.  
NOW.

*Jack slowly takes off his shirt and gets down on the floor.*

*Jack attempts to do a couple of sit ups.*

Jack I don't have a very likable personality type.

Thomas Oh really?

Jack I know because the boys at school tell me.  
Adults don't actually say it to your face but you know that's what  
they're thinking.

Thomas One.

Jack My parents like me.  
They have to like me.  
They're my parents.  
My little sister likes me but she's too young to think any different.

Thomas Two.

Jack She likes me even when I take her toys away from her.  
I do that sometimes just to see how she reacts.  
It's quite interesting.  
Actually.

Thomas Three.  
Keep going.

Jack So if I work out every single afternoon for a month will I have a body  
like yours?

Thomas        Train hard and we'll see.

Jack            Will I or won't I?

Thomas        No.

*Jack collapses.*

Jack            What's the point?

*Pause.*

Jack            I'm under developed for my age because I was born premature.  
 Also I had an eating disorder last year.  
 I stopped eating because I thought it would be an interesting  
 experiment.  
 I was right.  
 My hypotheses are often correct.

*Thomas presses the bench.*

Jack            So now I have to go see my therapist every week and talk about my  
 issues.  
 My parents pay her loads to listen to me talk.  
 I just make up stuff.  
 It's fun.  
 Business studies is my favourite subject.  
 It's easy to earn shit loads.  
 You just have to be competitive.  
 That's the key.  
 You can achieve anything you just have to believe it.

*Jack thinks.*

Most of the world is poor.  
 Did you know that 1% of the population own 40% of the world's  
 wealth?

*Thomas holds the weight midair.*

Thomas        Yes.

Jack            You knew that?

Thomas        Yes.

*Pause.*

*Thomas moves on to sit ups.*

Jack            You're poor aren't you?

*Pause*

Thomas        Not as poor as you.

Jack            Hey?

Thomas        Do you have a job?

Jack            No way.

Thomas        I didn't think so.  
I have a job.

Jack            Doing what?

Thomas        I pack shelves at Coles.  
Every morning at three a.m.

Jack            Fuck that.

Thomas        Really?

Jack            I don't need a job.  
My parents are loaded.  
They give me everything.

Thomas        Then you will always be an infant.  
Are you going to live with your parents all your life?

Jack            No  
way.

Thomas        Then you will have to get a job.  
You will have to look after yourself.

Jack            Yeah I know that.  
I've already discussed it with the guidance counsellor.

*Pause.*

Soon as I'm old enough  
I'm out of here.  
I hate this place  
hate them.  
They treat me like a kid.

Thomas        Maybe you act like one.

Jack            You're my personal trainer

you're supposed to encourage me.

Thomas No I am supposed to evict the lazy demon from your chest.

Jack What the?

Thomas Thirty sit-ups.

Jack I hate you.

*Thomas laughs.*

Thomas I hate you more.  
Go.  
Go.  
Go.

### **Scene**

*The private school boys surround Jack.*

Boy 1 Jack.  
Jack.  
Jack.  
Guess what we've got?

Jack What?

Boy 3 Guess.

Jack I don't know.

Boy 1 Ok give him a clue.

Boy 3 Here's a clue here's a clue.  
It's about the size of your dick.

Boy 2 And it rhymes with dick.

Jack I don't know.  
I don't know.

Boy 2 It's a usb stick.

Boy 1 And guess what's on it?

Jack What?

Boy 1 That stuff we filmed on our phones.  
What you did to that grade eight kid.

Boys 2            You reduced him to mush man.

Boy 3            Yeah to a primitive life form.

Boy 2            A single celled organism.

Boy 1            He went totally algae.

Boys 2           Yeah totally chlorophyta.

*Pause*

                    It's a type of algae.

Jack            You told me to do it.

Boys 2           You signed up for it Jack.  
Remember?

Jack            What are you going to do with it?

Boy 1            Good question great question.

Boy 3            Well we could be merciful  
destroy the evidence.

Boy 2            We could do that.

Boy 3            Or ...we could upload it to u tube.

Jack            No.  
Please no  
don't do that.

*The boys laugh.*

Boy 1            We'll see Jack.

## **Scene**

*He addresses the therapist.*

He            I spend a lot of my time in the X5.  
I can really rack up the mileage in a month.  
I'd estimate I spend about three/four hours a day in the car.  
That's including the journey to and from work via the Citylink.  
I like to just drive  
drive for no reason.

I feel relaxed in the X5.  
I feel in control  
at ease...

*Pause.*

They gave the X5 a thorough going over.  
The Accident Investigation Unit.  
All part of normal procedure they said.  
For the report to the Coroner...  
They interviewed me.  
Asked me was I playing any music at the time?  
How loud?  
Did I shift the car seat when I got in?  
Had I adjusted the rear view mirrors?  
Actually there's a feature we didn't get.  
An optional extra.  
It automatically adjusts the seat height and the rear view when you get  
in.  
It's very clever it senses who you are by your weight.  
That really infuriates me actually.  
When I get in the car and She's changed all my settings.  
The X5 is MY vehicle.  
I did the market research.  
I know all the specs.  
I choose the colour.  
She has her car.  
I have mine.  
The X5 is mine.

*Pause, He remembers something.*

*He looks at Her.*

*She is doing Capoeira dancing to African music.*

*Perhaps as the tension between He and She grows her Capoeira dancing becomes more confrontational.*

He           Where are the keys to the VW?

She           Take the X5.

He           I can't take the X5.

She           Why not?

*Pause*

He           It's out of fuel.



She            So swing by the servo and fill it up.

He            Look I'm in a rush.

She            Why?

He            What?

*Pause*

She            Where are you driving at eight o'clock at night?

*Pause.*

He            Nowhere  
look just give me the keys to the VW.

She            I need the VW.

He            Why do you need the VW?

She            I need the VW to take to Capoeira class tonight.  
Remember my new Afro Brazillian martial art?

He            Oh right.  
So very important.

She            You should try it  
you're putting on weight.

He            I am not.

She            You look bloated.

He            Thank you.

She            You've stacked on about five kilos in the last month.

He            It's my medication look can you just take the X5 you're only going up  
the road.

She            No.

He            No?

She            The keys to the X5 are on the bench.  
I'll be home later tonight.

*She dances away.*

He           Right.

*He finds the keys to the X5.*

*He holds them sweating panicked.*

*He sits on the couch.*

*He glares at the African doll and the Ikea toys.*

*They glare back.*

### **Scene**

*Thomas is furiously working out in the family gym.*

*He's going very hard.*

*She enters in towel, bathers and goggle ready for a swim.*

*He drops the weights, sweating.*

*He catches her looking at him.*

She           Oh hello I was just going for a swim.  
              Where's Jack?

Thomas       In his room.  
              He says he is "too anxious" work out today.

She           Oh god he gets that from me.  
              The anxiety.  
              His exams are coming up.  
              They put a lot of pressure on them at that school.  
              But it's worth it.

*Silence.*

She           Don't worry Thomas we'll still pay you.

*Thomas towels himself off and starts to rub butter into his skin.*

She           Smells good.  
              What is it?

*Pause*

Thomas       This is special butter imported from Africa.

She           Wow.

Thomas       My skin becomes very very dry.  
This butter keeps my skin moist and soft.

She           Yes yes I noticed you had moist  
soft  
skin.

*Thomas rubs the butter into the scar on his neck.*

Thomas       It is also very good for healing scars.

She           Oh really?  
What about stretch marks?  
I've got shocking stretch marks from when I had Alice.  
Can I...  
Could I...  
Try...

*Thomas hands over the tub of butter.*

She           Smells wonderful.  
Smells like...  
Africa.

Thomas       Africa does not smell like this.

She           No.  
No right.

*She grabs more of the butter and rubs it into her neck.*

She           I would love to go to Africa  
on Safari or something  
you know when Alice is a bit older.

Thomas       Africa is no place for small children.

*Thomas is smiling.*

She           Oh god I think I may have pulled something in my Capoeira class last  
night.

*Pause.*

I don't suppose...  
I don't /suppose ...

Thomas       You want me to rub it in for you?

She            Oh could you,,,?

*Thomas massages She.*

Thomas        This is a very special technique.

She            Oh right?

*She groans with pain.*

She            I have so  
                  many  
                  knots.

*She groans again.*

She            You're not pushing Jack too hard are you Thomas?  
                  On the weights?

Thomas        No.  
                  He is not doing very much.

She            He's not as strong as you.  
                  He's not as fit.  
                  He was born premature you know.

Thomas        Yes you have told me this.

She            You know I never wanted children.  
                  They sort of... disgusted me.  
                  Oh god  
                  I can't believe I'm telling you this.  
                  I feel like I can trust you Thomas.  
                  Really trust you.  
                  Of course everything changed after Jack was born.  
                  God it was so awful those first few weeks.  
                  His little tiny baby body in the humidity crib.  
                  Helpless just so helpless.  
                  There was nothing we could do.  
                  I was a nervous wreck.  
                  That's when it all started.  
                  My anxiety  
                  my irritable bowel syndrome  
                  my Alopecia.  
                  Clumps of my hair fell out.  
                  The whole thing was a nightmare  
                  just horrific.  
                  Jack survived though.  
                  We survived.

*She winces.*

Not so hard Thomas.

*Thomas pulls back on the massage.*

She Jack needs someone like you to look up to Thomas.  
His father...  
Well his father is such a... such a...

Thomas Rohu Tupu

She What's that?

Thomas Distant Spirit.

She Yes.  
Yes exactly.  
He's a rohu tupu.  
Oh god that feels good.

*She groans with pleasure*

She You're an inspiration Thomas.  
Truly.  
You have inspired our family to give back  
to change our lives.  
Your story.  
Your strength.  
Your family's strength.

*Pause.*

Especially under the circumstances.

Thomas What circumstances?

She Your.  
Well your niece Thomas.

Thomas Acanit.

She Yes yes poor little Acanit.

*Pause*

She I can't even imagine what your sister is going through.

*Pause*

She            Thomas...?

Thomas        Yes?

She            I...

*Pause.*

She            I'd do anything to protect my children.  
                  Absolutely anything.  
                  I would tear someone apart with my bare teeth.

*Pause.*

She            If I had too.

*Pause.*

She            You know  
                  if it came to that.

*Darkness.*

### **Scene**

*Thomas is working out in the gym.*

*Jack is watching.*

*Jack's phone beeps.*

*He checks the message, is worried by it and puts the phone away.*

*Pause.*

Jack            You're strong.

*Pause*

Jack            I bet you could smash someone's head in.  
                  Bet you could smash three heads in at the same time.  
                  That scar on your neck.  
                  How'd you get it?  
                  Were you in a fight?

*Thomas is silent.*

Jack            Tell me.  
                  Please.

*Thomas stops lifting weights. He sits up.*

Thomas        All right.  
                  When I was a boy I was very very small for my age.

Jack            No way.

Thomas        Yes.  
                  The other boys used to laugh at me.  
                  They would call me names.

Jack            Like what?

Thomas        Like kidogo nyani

*Jack repeats the name.*

Jack            Kidogo nyani.  
                  What does that mean?

Thomas        It means little ape.  
                  Some of the boys would hit me and kick me and steal my food.  
                  After some time I had had enough of this.

Jack            So what'd you do?

Thomas        I needed a weapon to protect myself.  
                  A few of the boys carried knives.  
                  So one night when everyone was asleep  
                  I crept up to an older boy.  
                  I reached for his knife.  
                  Just as I found the blade the boy woke up and grabbed by hand.

*Thomas grabs Jack's hand. Jack jumps in fright.*

Thomas        *Oh you caught me.*  
                  I said.  
                  And we laughed.  
                  We laughed and we laughed.  
                  Then the older boy said to me.  
                  *Would you like to see my knife kidogo nyani .*  
                  Yes, I said.  
                  And that is when the boy...

*Thomas grabs his knife and thrusts it at Jack's neck.*

*Jack jumps with fright.*

Thomas        ...stabbed me in the neck.

Jack            Maybe I should carry a knife.

Thomas        You would only injure yourself.

Jack            Do you carry one?

Thomas        Why would I carry a knife?

Jack            To protect yourself.  
                  Like from other gangs and stuff?

Thomas        What gangs?

Jack            I dunno you see them on the news.

Thomas        And you believe what you see on TV?

Jack            But you're a gangster rapper aren't you?

Thomas        I am not a gangster rapper Jack.

*Thomas returns to the weights.*

Jack            Australia's Got Talent auditions are next week.  
                  Can I come ?

Thomas        No.

Jack            They could interview me before you go on.  
                  I can tell them all about you.

Thomas        What do you know about me Jack?

Jack            I know what you said at dinner about the helicopters and the guns and  
                  the lions and stuff.  
                  And... now I know about your awesome scar.  
                  That's gold.  
                  Australia's Got Talent are going to fucking love that stuff.  
                  So can I?

Thomas        No.

Jack            Please.

Thomas        No.

Jack            Please.

Thomas        No.



Jack            Please.

*Perhaps Thomas makes a mosquito noise and slaps it.*

Thomas        Ndudu.

Jack            Is that a yes?  
                  I'll take that as a yes.  
                  Hey you know if win you get two hundred and fifty thousand dollars?

Thomas        Why do you think I'm doing it?

Jack            For the money?

*Thomas pauses.*

Thomas        For Acanit.  
                  For my niece.  
                  Her spirit is still with us.

Jack            What?

Thomas        We have to take her body home to Africa.

Jack            Why?

Thomas        Because my sister is very afraid that if we bury her in this country  
                  Acanit will be lost.  
                  Her spirit has not learned to belong here.

Jack            Woah.

Thomas        This is very expensive.

Jack            Like how much?

Thomas        Thirty thousand at least.  
                  And we must go with her  
                  home to Uganda.

Jack            Just ask my rents  
                  they're rich.

Thomas        That is not what we want from your parents.  
                  I have to find this money myself.  
                  It is my responsibility.  
                  I have to work harder  
                  (faster)  
                  Acanit is waiting.

*Thomas gathers his belongings to leaves.*

Jack           It's crap.  
                  Like what happened to your niece and that.

*Pause.*

                  Sorry.

*Pause.*

Thomas        Thank you Jack.

*Thomas goes to leave.*

Jack           So do you want to hang out?

Thomas        I have to go to work.

Jack           Please?

Thomas        Don't you have friends your own age?  
                  Who is texting you?  
                  Go and play with them.

Jack           They're not really my friends...

*Pause*

Jack           Please?

Thomas        Twenty minutes.

Jack           Yes!

*Blackout.*

*Thomas and Jack stand around a box cube.*

Thomas        What are we waiting for exactly?

Jack           Usually she cries and screams until you let her out.

*Silence, they wait.*

Jack           Maybe she's fallen asleep.

*He peeps inside the box.*

Jack            Alice?  
                  Alice?  
                  Yeah she has she's fallen asleep.

*Blackout.*

*(Outside on the grass Jack has one of the Ikea toys.*

*He is using it to frighten the rabbit.*

*Thomas is watching him, astounded.*

Thomas        What are you doing?

Jack            I'm spooking Bunnykins.  
                  Sometimes when they're freaked out they eat their babies.

Thomas        Leave it alone. )

*Blackout.*

*Jack collapses as if dead.*

Jack            Put the knife where she'll see it.  
                  Thomas put the knife where she'll see it.

*Thomas picks up the knife and places it near Jack.*

Jack            Yeah yeah.

*Silence.*

Jack            Is she coming?

Thomas        No.

*Silence*

Jack            Is she coming yet?

Thomas        No.

*Silence.*

*Thomas checks his watch.*

*He walks out of the house.*

*Jack is left for dead.*

*Long silence.*

*He enters zombie like staring at his I pad.*

*He steps over Jack and walks out of the room.*

*Jack stands dripping in tomato sauce blood.*

*He glares at his father.*

Jack            I'm dead.  
                   Dad?  
                   Hey?  
                   Daddy?  
                   Zombie?  
                   Junk head?

*Jack receives another text message from the bullies.*

Jack            I'm dead.

*Jack notices his father's bottle of prescription pills.*

*Jack picks up the pills and has an idea.*

*We see him pocketing the pills and replacing them with his mother's vitamins.*

*Blackout.*

## **Scene**

*The three private school boys surround Jack.*

Jack            I've got pills.

Boy 1          Yeah?  
                   What are they?

Jack            Top shelf shit.  
                   My dad works for a pharmaceutical company.

Boy 2          Uppers or downers?

Jack            Both  
                   I think.

Jack            Swapped them with mum's vitamins.  
                   He's too zombie to know the difference.

*One of the boys snatches the pills from Jack.*

*They swallow a few.*

Boy 1            Well done Jack.

Jack             I can gets heaps more.

Boy 3            Yeah?

Jack             Anything you want.

Boy 2            That'd be excellent Jack.

Jack             So um  
                      can I have that usb stick?

Boy 2            What's that Jack?

Jack             Can I have the usb stick?

Boy 1            What usb stick?

Jack             The usb with the film on it.

Boy 1            Oh that?  
                      No.  
                      Which ones do you take first  
                      the blue or the red?

### **Scene**

*He and She are in bed.*

*She is moisturizing her face with butter.*

*He is watching another horror film on his I pad.*

*He should be in a slightly nervous state, maybe he's shaking his leg. He's coming down from the Zanex.*

*He pops a pill.*

She                He's not used to this climate.

He                 Hmm?

She                In this climate Thomas's skin can become very dry.

*He looks up from the I pad.*

He           What dryer than Africa?

She           Yes that's right.

He           How can it be dryer here than in Africa?  
Africa?  
How is that possible?

She           I don't know.

He           I don't buy that.

She           Well that's what he said I'm just telling you.

*Long pause.*

He           So he can't use a normal commercial men's moisturizer.  
Is that what you're saying?

She           He prefers this butter  
from Africa.

He           You could have an allergic reaction to that.  
You don't know what's in it.

She           Just go back to your stupid horror film.

*Horror soundtrack.*

She           Did you put the pool cover on after you used it?

He           Yes.

She           Look at me.

*He looks at her with suppressed fury.*

She           Did you put the pool cover on?

He           Yes  
I put the pool cover on.

*Silence*

She           Did you feed Bunnykins?

He           Why do I have to feed the rabbit?  
Children make toys in China and ours can't even feed their pet rabbit.

*He feels under the covers and pulls out the African doll in the room.*

He           What is that doing here?

She           What?

He           That doll what's it doing in our bed?

She           I don't know.

He           Did you put it there?

She           No.

He           Then who put it there?

She           Alice probably.  
She adores it.  
It's her new best friend.

*He stares at the doll.*

He           I don't like it.

She           Don't be ridiculous.

He           I don't like the way it looks at me.

She           It's not looking at you.

He           Why did he give it to us?  
I mean really.  
Why?

She           It was a gesture.

He           Oh yeah  
What sort of gesture?  
Like pointing the finger...  
Like pointing the bone.  
That sort of gesture?

*He stares intently at the doll.*

He           It looks like her.  
Don't you think?

She           Like who?

He           Acanit.

*She stares at the doll for a moment.*

She            I think you should go easy on the Xanax.  
                  How many have you taken tonight?

He            I think I'm building up a tolerance.  
                  They're not fucking working.

*He pops two more Xanax.*

He            I've got a bad feeling about that thing.

She            You don't have feelings.

He            I have fucking feelings.  
                  I'm not a machine  
                  I'm not a fucking ATM.

*Pause as He ruminates glaring at the doll.*

He            I suppose I'm the big bad boogie man.  
                  Is there a boogie man in Africa?  
                  I'm sure there is.  
                  That's probably what they're calling me next door.  
                  The big overweight white booga booga man.  
                  Everything was ok before all this happened.  
                  Life was ok.

*He grabs his pillow and goes to leave.*

She            Where are you going?

He            I'm not sleeping with that.

*He glares at the African toy then exits.*

*She pulls the face mask over her eyes and turns the light out.*

*He walks through the darkness and sits in front of the plasma screen.*

*He sits on the couch squashing a stray Ikea toy.*

*The toy speaks in toy style Mandarin.*

Ikea Toy:    Hello!

*He drops the toy in horror.*

*Blackout.*



**Scene**

*Australia's Got Talent auditions.*

*Thomas delivers the poem in spoken word style.*

Thomas	<p><i>Child</i>  <i>child of Africa</i>  <i>your mother bleeds for you.</i>  <i>Hear her anguished cries.</i>  <i>The blood of her womb runs rivers</i>  <i>deep and wide.</i>  <i>Child</i>  <i>child of Africa.</i>  <i>Do not cry for the world is deaf.</i>  <i>Do not ask for they will tell you there is nothing left.</i>  <i>It is not enough just to survive</i>  <i>you must thrive.</i>  <i>Child</i>  <i>Child of Africa</i>  <i>Now that you have died</i>  <i>your spirit has been torn from form and flesh</i>  <i>and you must rest.</i>  <i>So fly home</i>  <i>not alone</i>  <i>but with the company of birds</i>  <i>and on the wings of my words.</i>  <i>Fly home to Africa</i>  <i>to the land of our ancestor.</i></p>
Judge 1	<p>Wow.          Wow.</p>
Judge 2	<p>Problem.          I hate poetry.</p>
Judge 3	<p>He's so urban          Honey do you rap?</p>
Thomas	<p>No.</p>
Judge 3	<p>Oh.</p>
Judge 1	<p>What's your story sweetie?</p>
Thomas	<p>I am from Uganda.          I spent many years in a refugee camp.</p>

Judge 3 Yes that's terrible but don't you have another story to share with Australia?

Thomas No.

Judge 3 I think you do...

Thomas What story?

Judges 3 Something tragic happened to your niece didn't it Thomas...?

Thomas Acanit?

Judge 3 Yes little Acanit.

Thomas How do you know about my niece?

Judge 2 Tell Australia what happened to little Acanit.

*Thomas observes the salivating judges hungry for a piece of tragedy.*

Judge 1 You're here today because you need the two hundred and fifty thousand dollars to send your niece's body back to Africa. Isn't that right Thomas?  
Thomas?  
Tell us sweetie.

Judge 2 Tell us your story.

Judge 3 Tell us.

*Thomas speaks in language.*

Thomas Mimi si nyani.

Judge 1 What did he say?

Judge 2 We have to vote.

Judge 3 I just don't think he's got what it takes to make it.

Judge 2 I love the look.

Judge 1 The look is great.  
Have you considered modelling?

Judge 2 It's a shame he doesn't rap.

Judge 3 Yuh.  
Big problem.

*Long pause.*

Judge 1        Look I'm afraid it's a no from me.

Judge 3        Well it's a yes from me.

*Long pause.*

Judge 2        It's definitely a no from me.

*Thomas stands there.*

Judge 3        Sorry.  
                   Thank you.  
                   You can go now.  
                   Hello?  
                   Thanks.

## **Scene**

*Outside the auditions.*

Jack            Thomas!  
                   Hey Thomas.  
                   Thomas?  
                   Did you get in?

*Thomas glares at Jack.*

                  Thomas?

*Thomas shakes his head.*

Jack            I don't get it.  
                   Did you tell them your story?

Thomas        What story?  
                   The story of how your father ran over my niece?

Jack            What?  
                   No.

Thomas        What story?

Jack            About the lions and helicopters and the war in Africa...

Thomas        No.

Jack            That's gold.

That was your ticket.  
Australia's Got Talent love that stuff.

Thomas      Leave me alone.

Jack         I don't get it.  
                That's not fair.

Thomas      Nothing is fair in this life.  
                Nothing.

Jack         You can try next year.  
                You can do it.  
                You can achieve anything if you believe it.

Thomas      Really?  
                Is that what you think?  
                Tell that to my brother.  
                Tell that to my mother.  
                Tell that to my niece.

Jack         I'm sorry.

*Silence.*

Thomas      Go.

Jack         No.

*Jack doesn't go.*

Jack         You can't give up.

Thomas      Go away.

Jack         I'm just trying to help you.

Thomas      You think I need your help?

Jack         Yes.  
                No.  
                I don't know.

Thomas      Look at you.  
                You were born too early.

Jack         Yeah so.

Thomas      Sometimes it's better to let babies die.

Jack            If my parents heard you say that they'd...

Thomas        What?  
What would they do?  
I'm so scared.

Jack            I thought we were friends.

Thomas        Your parents pay me to be your friend  
because no one else will be.  
I do it because I need the money.

*Jack pulls a knife.*

*Thomas laughs at him.*

Jack            Don't laugh at me.  
Stop laughing at me.  
Don't laugh at me.

Thomas        What's this?

Jack            I have to protect myself.

Thomas        From what?  
Your mother?

Jack            You don't know.  
You don't know.

Thomas        It must be very hard to be you Jack.  
Put it down kuzuguzungu kidogo mtoto. (confused little boy)

Jack            Don't call me that.

Thomas        You will cut yourself stupid boy.

Jack            I'm not sorry my Dad ran over your niece.

Thomas        What?

Jack            Sucked in.

Thomas        What did you say?

Jack            I said I'm glad your niece's head got squashed.  
Yeah.  
So there.

*Thomas flares up, he roars at Jack, terrifying him,*

*Thomas looks like he is about to tear Jack's head off.*

*He suddenly goes quiet.*

Thomas        Do you want me to hurt you?

Jack            Yes.

*Jack runs away.*

*It grows dark.*

### **Scene**

*He is in his pyjamas.*

*He's watching a horror film on the plasma.*

*He is in a state of agitation.*

*The clump of Ikea toys make strange shadows on the walls.*

*Perhaps their eyes light up.*

Ikea Toys      Hello!

He              What?

*He looks around...*

*There's no one there. He resumes watching the film.*

Ikea Toys      Hello!  
                    Our name is Pan Pan.

He              Who's there?

*The Ikea toys light up and begin speaking in high pitched, toy like Mandarin.*

*He is horrified, hugging himself in fear on the couch.*

Ikea Toys      Our name is Pan Pan.  
                    We are children from China.  
                    We work from six in the morning until ten at night for less than  
                    twenty-cents a day.  
                    Some of us have lost our fingers in the factory machines.

*In English.*

Uh oh!

*In Mandarin.*

Some of us have been burnt in factory fires.

*In English.*

Oopsy!

*In Mandarin.*

He           What are you saying?

Ikea Toys    We eat Shaobing a Chinese Sesame bread.  
Yum! Yum!

*The African toy responds in high pitched Swahili.*

African Doll   Jambo rafiki.  
Habari yako leo?  
Jina langu ni Wsesa  
Nili toka Uganda kwa mwAfrica  
Mimi kumi na mbili  
Nili pokua kumi mimi kuuawa yangu wazazi kwa sababu LRA  
maagizo.

(Hello.  
Nice to meet you.  
My name is Wesesa.  
I am from Uganda in Africa.  
I'm twelve years old.  
When I was ten the LRA made me shoot my parents.)

He           I don't understand you.

*In English.*

Ikea Toys    Uh oh!

African Doll   They also made me cut the ears and nose off my Aunts and Uncles.

*In English.*

Ikea Toys    Oopsy!

African Doll   I like to eat Matooke  
a traditional Ugandan dish made from mashed Banana.

*In English.*

Ikea Toys      Yum! Yum!

African Doll    When I grow up I want to live in Australia.

Ikea Toys      So do we!!  
                      Would you like to play with us?

African Doll    Yes let's be friends and play.

He                Shut up.  
                      Shut up.  
                      Shut the fuck up all of you.

### **Scene**

*The three bullies appear.*

*They circle Jack.*

Jack             Give me the stick.

Boy 1            News alert.  
                      Jack's M and M's have grown overnight.

Jack             Give it to me.

Boy 2            Well done Jack congratulations.

Jack             I'm warning you.

*Jack reveals the knife he has inside his shorts.*

Boy 1            I'm impressed.

Bully 3          We're impressed.

Jack             Give it to me.

*The bullies laugh.*

Jack             Give it to me now.

Boy 1            We're scared Jack.

*Boy 3 lunges at Jack.*

*Jack swings the knife around at him.*



Boy 1        All right.  
                   Ok  
                   I think he's serious.

Boy 3        He seems really serious.

Boy 1        Let's give him the usb.

Boy 2        Here.

*Jack steps on the usb destroying it.*

*They laugh.*

Jack         What?  
                   What are you laughing at?

Boy 1        Too late Jack.  
                   We already uploaded it.  
                   Everyone at schools watching it.  
                   You're a star Jack.

*Jack let's the knife drop to his side.*

*A school siren, whistle.*

*The boys bolt.*

*Jack is caught holding the knife.*

*Darkness.*

## **Scene**

*At home.*

*She is in a state.*

*He is silent.*

*He is staring at the African toy.*

She            Jack?  
                   Jack talk to us.  
                   Jack darling please talk to us.  
                   Please tell us what happened?  
                   You can tell us anything  
                   anything at all.

Jack?

*Perhaps Alice the baby begins to cry through the monitor, distracting She.*

*She goes to He.*

*They whisper.*

She            You talk to him.

He            Me?

She            You're his father.

He            He's not ready to talk.  
Don't force him.  
Why do you have to force everything?

She            Our son was caught at school with a knife.  
There's more to this than he's saying.  
Talk to him for god's sake.

*She pushes He towards Jack.*

*She leaves to check on the baby.*

*He is silent.*

He            Jack.  
You're probably worried that if you tell  
us what happened someone's going to get into big trouble.  
There's a code isn't there?  
At my school it was "dobbers die at Westgate High..."  
But this is very serious Jack.  
A knife was involved.  
You have to tell us Jack  
You have to tell us exactly what happened.

*Jack looks at his father.*

Jack           I'll bet you were a dobber.

He            No I was...

Jack           Bet you were the kid that nobody liked.

He            I had a lot of friends actually more than...

Jack           They flushed your head in the toilet.

He           Once.  
              They did that to everyone.  
              It was school tradition.  
              It was just a bit of fun.  
              Look the point is...

Jack         Bet you went squealing wee wee wee all the way home to mummy.

He           Watch it.

Jack         Oink oink oink.

He           Shut up.

Jack         You were high weren't you?

He           What?

Jack         The morning you ran over that kid.

He           No I was not.

Jack         Yeah bet you were off your face on Xanax.

*He stares coldly at Jack.*

He           Jack you are a little fucking shit.

*She returns to the room, catches the last of His sentence.*

She         Jack Dad didn't mean that.  
              Did Dad?

He           Yes  
              actually Dad did.

She         Get out.  
              Get out.  
              Leave this to me.

*He leaves.*

She         Darling.  
              Talk to me.  
              Please.

Jack is silent.

Ok.  
All right.

I'm going up to the school.

*Jack freaks out.*

I'm going to speak to the principal.  
I'm going to interrogate every single student personally.  
I am going to raise hell at that school until I find out exactly what is going on.

Jack Mum.  
Mum.

She Yes?  
Yes darling?

Jack I brought the knife to school.

She What?  
Why would you do that?  
Why on earth would you do that Jack?

Jack It's nothing serious.  
I was just mucking around.

She Why would you bring a knife to school in the first place?

*Jack pauses for a moment.*

Jack Thomas told me to do it.

She What?

Jack Thomas said that in Uganda everyone carries a knife.

She This is not Uganda.  
This is not Africa.  
Violence is not the answer.

Jack Thomas said it'd make me feel powerful.  
He said it'd make me feel in control.  
I guess he was just trying to help me.

She I see.  
Well Thomas was very very wrong to say that.  
That is not how we do things here.

*She hugs him.*

I don't want you to see Thomas anymore.

Jack           What?

She            I'm sorry Jack.  
I know you're fond of him.

Jack           No more personal training?

She            Absolutely not.  
Thomas is clearly not fit to be coaching anyone.  
And he's not to come near this house.  
Anywhere near you.  
Do you understand?

Jack           But he lives next door.

She            Oh god.  
Dad can go next door right now and tell  
Thomas.  
Tell him he's no longer welcome in our home.

Jack           Really?

She            Yes Jack.  
We're better safe than sorry.

*She feels her hair, a clump of it falls out.*

### **Scene**

*Potentially she is visible throughout this scene maniacally brushing her hair and pacing the house agitated.*

*Perhaps he is in the garden. He stares at Alice's scooter. Picks it up perhaps.*

He            Thomas?  
Ah Thomas?  
Can I...  
Can I have a quick  
word?

Thomas       Yes what is it?

He            Look um.  
Look...  
There's something...  
Something I have to say  
to  
you....  
It's...  
It's quite difficult...

Thomas        Yes  
                  I have been waiting for this.

*Pause.*

He                I'm afraid...  
                  we have to terminate our arrangement.  
                  The... the personal training for Jack  
                  whatever you call it.  
                  Here's your last payment.  
                  And... and my wife asked me to tell you that ah...  
                  It's probably best if you don't come over anymore.  
                  Nothing personal...

Thomas        Nothing personal?

He                Right.

*Pause*

Thomas        That is all.

He                That's all.

*He walk away.*

Thomas        What is it that I have done to you?

He                Come on Thomas I think you know what you've done.

Thomas        No I do not know.  
                  You tell me.

He                The life coaching got a bit out of hand didn't it?  
                  Telling a fourteen year old to take a knife to school?  
                  Not just any fourteen year old  
                  Jack.

Thomas        He told you I said this?

He                Well yes.

Thomas        Where is Jack?  
                  I want to speak to him.

He                Actually my wife doesn't want you to see him.

Thomas        So it is my word against your son's?

He            Look between you and me Jack's easily influenced.  
                  Some information is dangerous in the wrong hands.  
                  So anyway...  
                  Sorry for the... inconvenience.

*He hands over the African toy.*

He            Oh and here is uh... here is little...  
                  Thank you but we can't possibly keep her/it.

Thomas      You insult us.

He            No ...  
                  No it's just Alice is frightened of it.

Thomas      Really?

*Pause*

He            ...Yes.  
                  She... cries when she sees it.

Thomas      You are not the one that is frightened?

He            No of course I'm not.

*Silent.*

Thomas      Mmm.  
                  Why do you not drive that big white car anymore?

He            What the X5?

Thomas      You have not driven that car since Acanit's death.

He            Watching me are you?

Thomas      What is wrong with it?

He            Nothing.

*Perhaps Thomas whispers ominously.*

Thomas      Do you think it is possessed?

He            What?

Thomas      Do you think some demon spirit lives in it?

He            No no of course I...

Thomas        Perhaps it is you that is possessed.

*Thomas walks away.*

*He looks down at the African doll he is holding.*

### Scene

(She            What I've learned from this...  
                   is to trust less.  
                   Yes.  
                   Appear to trust but in reality trust no one.  
                   When I was pregnant with Jack I felt strange.  
                   I did it's true I felt...  
                   colonised.  
                   But when he was born when I first saw him  
                   it kicked in right then, right that minute, the maternal instinct.  
                   (We're animals.  
                   We're still animals.  
                   We forget that. )

*She picks up an Ikea toy and starts to consume it viciously ripping into its flesh with her teeth and swallowing it.*

*He approaches her. He reaches out to her. She snarls toy flesh in her mouth and turns away.*

*Darkness.*

### Scene

*Jack walks outside to the rabbit's cage.*

*He opens the door of the cage.*

Jack            Go on.  
                   You're free.  
                   This is your big chance.

*Jack waits.*

                  What are you waiting for?

*Jack jumps up and down on the cage like an aggressive monkey.*

*The sound of a Helicopter passing over head merges into the next scene.*

### Scene



*She is staring at the open rabbit cage.*

*She screams*

She            Oh my god.

*He and Jack rush out of the house.*

He            What?

She            Oh god oh god oh god oh god.

He            What is it?

She            Bunnykins is eating her babies.

Jack          Awesome.

*Jack gets his I phone and starts to film it.*

She            Oh god  
                  Oh god  
                  Jack stop that.  
                  Who left the cage door open?  
                  Who?

He            I didn't.

She            Jack?

Jack          Not me.

She            Somebody has left the cage door open.  
                  And Bunnykins has panicked.

Jack          She's got a foot in her mouth.

She            Get rid of her.

He            Hey?

She            Get rid of Bunnykins.  
                  Now.

He            How?

She            I don't care  
                  Take her to the vet  
                  put her to sleep just get her away  
                  before Alice sees this.

She'll have nightmares.

*She hears something and becomes alert.*

*She looks around and spies Thomas watching from next door.*

*She lowers her voice.*

She            Oh god  
                  Thomas.  
                  Thomas is watching.

He            What?

She            Don't look.

*Thomas leaves.*

She            Oh god  
                  Oh god.  
                  Oh god.  
                  Inside.  
                  Inside everyone.  
                  Just look casual.  
                  I'm calling the police.

*The sound of sirens and helicopters.*

*A heavy knock on the door (next door).*

*Blackout.*

## **Scene**

*He is in bed.*

*Perhaps she is peering through the window at next door while brushing her hair.*

*Pieces of her hair are falling out. She shows him a clump of her hair.*

She            Look.  
                  Look at this.  
                  It's happening again.  
                  We have to do something about next door.

He            The police are looking into it.

She            They say there's nothing they can do.

He            That's a surprise.  
Look we don't know Thomas opened the rabbit's cage.

She            Oh so it's just coincidence that the night before it happens  
we tell Thomas he isn't welcome here.  
Then suddenly out of the blue Bunnykin's cage door is broken into.  
I'd say that's a motive wouldn't you?

He            Not really no...  
Why would he bother?

She            Don't you see?  
Can't you see?  
It was an act of terror.  
He wanted to terrorise us.  
For what we did.  
For what we've done to them.  
Oh god.  
She was so frightened.  
I can't bear to think about it.  
I feel sick.  
Those poor little baby bunnies.

*She has a sudden realisation.*

She            Oh god it's back.  
My feeling of doom of dread.

He            You're being hysterical.

She            So you don't care that Thomas has brutalised our rabbit  
that he has manipulated our son?

He            He's hardly...

She            You're on his side now are you?

He            Did I say that?

She            Well what are you going to do about it?

He            What would you like me to do?  
(Run over their other children perhaps?  
Firebomb their house?)

She            We have to do something.

He            I don't think we should antagonise them.

She            They're antagonising us.

He I think we should proceed with caution.

She We were so naive so trusting.

He I wasn't.

She We forgot that he's from a war torn country.  
He's seen horrible things.  
Done horrible things.  
He's damaged.  
It's not his fault.  
I know that.  
All he's ever known is war.  
He's a danger to himself.

*Pause.*

He's a danger living next door.

He You invited him over.

She I was trying to be a good neighbour...

He Good fences make good neighbours.

She ...I was trying to reconcile your fuck up.

He My fuck up that's what we're calling it.

She I'm always left picking up the pieces of your negligence.

He What negligence?

She You never ever put the lock on the Bugaboo.

He It's supposed to be automatic isn't it?

She You're always leaving the pool cover off.

He Once when I was in the middle of cleaning it.

She The pool was unsupervised when I came home.

He I had to take a leak.

She That's all it takes thirty-seconds and a child is dead.  
And you don't hear anything.  
Children just sink.  
Blip.

Like that.  
The pool is a silent killer.

He           That's not silent.

She           What?

He           Blop that's a sound  
              that's not silent.

She           You are making fun of a deadly issue.

*Under his breath*

He           No wonder your hair is falling out.

She           What did you say?

He           All this shit you buy.  
              It's never going to make you the mother you wish you were.

She           I am a good mother.  
              I am a great mother for your information.

He           You hated every minute of your pregnancies.

She           Hoh!  
              That's a lie.

He           You moaned the entire time.

She           I love my children.  
              I adore my children.

He           You said Jack felt like an alien inside you.  
              Like he was feeding off you.  
              Draining you of everything.  
              Your youth  
              your career  
              even the calcium in your teeth.

She           It's called post-natal depression you scrotum.

He           It was more than that.

She           How would you know?

He           No wonder Jack was born premature  
              he wanted out early.

She           How dare you.

He            Our son's got issues.  
Big issues.  
You do realise that don't you?

She           Jack is fine.  
He's just fine.

He            Then why doesn't anybody like him?

She           That's not true.

He            So you don't you get that impression when we attend parent teacher  
interviews?

She           No no I do not.

He            They're not going to come out and actually say it are they?  
We're paying thirty thousand dollars a year at that school.  
They're hardly going to tell us our son's/ a...

She           Our son is growing into himself.  
And you  
you should be ashamed.

He            You've smothered him in bubble wrap.

She           I have protected him.  
I have loved him.  
What have you done?

He            I feel sorry for him.

She           Where have you been these last fourteen years?  
Marriage to you is like living with a... with a...  
Roho tupu.

He            What what?  
What is that?

She           Where do you go?

He            When?

She           When you go out in the X5 and you're gone  
gone for hours.  
Where do you go?

He            I drive.

I sit in the X5 and I drive round and round the Citylink.  
It's calm in the X5.  
It's still.  
Far away from  
this.  
It was.

She            I see.

*Jack appears, he is another room, he listens to the remainder of the conversation.*

He            Look I love Jack.

She            Do you?  
Really do you?

He            Yes I love my son.  
But I don't think...

*Pause*

I don't think I like him very much.

She            You can't say that.

He            Can't I?  
Why not?

She            You're his father.

He            Is there some law that says we have to like our own children?

She            Yes.  
Yes  
there  
is.

He            Is there?  
I don't think there is.

She            It's the law of nature.  
It's natural.

He            Is it?  
I wonder.  
Our pet rabbit ate her children.

She            They only do that when they're under threat.  
Thomas frightened her.  
He must have.  
Who else would have done it?

Bunnykins was just trying to protect her babies from an outside threat.

He By having them for lunch.

She The truth is.  
The truth is.  
None of this would have happened if you'd just looked behind you  
when you were backing out the drive.  
If you hadn't been such a careless...  
fucking idiot.  
It could have been our child.  
It could have been Alice.  
You are a liability.  
You are a liability and you are a coward.

*Silence.*

She At least one of us is prepared to do what it takes to protect our  
children.

He Oh yes and how are you going to do that?

She I'm going to buy that house next door.

*She looks in the mirror, all her hair has fallen out.*

*She is almost entirely bald.*

*She appears monstrous.*

*He looks in the mirror, shirtless.*

*He appears monstrous.*

### **Scene**

*She is gathering all the Ikea toys and shoving them in the wheelie bin.*

*He is watching this in a panic.*

*The African Doll speaks in Swahili.*

African Doll Hakuna!

He What?

African Doll Tafadhali wala kumiza rafiki yangu.  
Tafadhali Msada. Kuokoa.  
Tafadhali kuokoa marafiki zangu.



(No! Please don't bury my friends. Please! Help! Stop. Save them!  
Please save my friends. )

He            You shut up.  
              Shut up.  
              SHUT UP.

*He shakes the African Doll and accidently pulls it's arm off.*

*Darkness.*

### **Scene**

*The house is clean and sparse and white.*

*The IKEA toys are all gone.*

*She is wearing a platinum blonde wig.*

*Jack sits in silence watching the plasma. .*

*He is carefully sewing the African Doll's arm back on.*

*He dresses the African doll in another doll's dress. A very Western dress.*

*Thomas appears at the house.*

*He is carrying a crow bar.*

*He stands quietly in the dark watching the family inside.*

She            Well.

*Pause.*

She            That's that.

*Pause.*

She            They'll be gone tomorrow.

*Silence.*

It was going to happen sooner or later.  
It was inevitable.  
This suburb is one of the highest growth areas in the city.  
They would have had to move out eventually.  
No one can rent forever.

*Silence.*

She            Well.  
                  I think we should all take a Xanax and go to bed.  
                  What do you think?

*Jack and He nod their heads obediently.*

*Thomas speaks in language, except for "Fuck you."*

Thomas        Fuck you  
                  Fuck you mkuchukua kutoka kwetu (for taking everything from us.)  
                  Fuck you mkuchukua nyumba zetu (for taking our little girl.)

*Inside the house.*

She            What's he saying?

He             Fuck you I think.

Thomas        Fuck you mkuchukua wetu kidogo (for taking our home.)  
                  Fuck you mkuchukua matumaini yetu (for taking our dream)  
                  Fuck you mkuchukua kila kitu (for taking our hope.)  
                  Fuck you.  
                  Fuck you.  
                  Fuck  
                  you.

*The sound of smashing glass and metal.*

*A car alarm goes off.*

*She, He and Jack go to window.*

*Thomas has gone off stage to where the driveway is.*

Jack            Aren't you going to call the cops?

She            No.

*Pause.*

He             It's all right.  
                  We're insured.

*Thomas continues to smash the X5.*

*Car alarm continues to sound as the scene goes to black.*

**Scene**

*(Morning.*

*He is dressed for work.*

*He picks up the African toy clothed in the white dress.*

*She enters and watches him.*

*He puts the toy in his laptop bag.*

*He sees her and zips up the bag.*

He           Well I'm off.

*She doesn't respond.*

He           What?

*She goes to his bag, unzips it and pulls out a toy.*

She           What's this?

He           Nothing what?  
              What's that doing in there?  
              Must have been Alice.

She           You put it in there.

He           No I didn't.

She           I saw you.

He           No.

She           I saw you put it in there just then.

He           Did I?  
              Did I?  
              You saw me do that?

She           Yes.

He           I thought it was my I pad.  
              I thought I was putting my I pad in my bag but actually it was...

*He places the doll back in the room.*

He           Huh.

She            You're taking the X5?

He            Yes.  
                  Yes I am.  
                  I am taking the brand new X5 on the Citylink to work.

She            You're picking Alice up from day care at four?

He            Yes.

She            You won't forget?

He            I won't forget.

She            I trust you.  
                  You know that.  
                  I totally totally trust you.

He            Yes.  
                  I know that.

*They kiss.*

She            Have a nice day.

He            You too honey.

*He leaves then returns and takes the doll with him.)*

### **Scene**

*He is in a catatonic state clinging to the African toy. She is staring at him.*

She            You were on the news.  
                  Our new X5 was on the five o'clock news.  
                  I received a phone call telling me to turn on the television.  
                  So I turn it on and I see this aerial view from a Channel Nine  
                  helicopter.  
                  It's our X5 on the gateway bridge.  
                  It's stationary in the middle of peak hour traffic.  
                  And I know it's our X5 because there you are.  
                  There you are in that ridiculous pink shirt your mother bought you for  
                  Christmas. You've got out of the car and I think oh the X5 has a flat.  
                  Why doesn't he just call RACV? Why is he just standing there in the  
                  middle of traffic? And then my blood runs cold because I realise what  
                  the time is. I realise it's five o'clock and Alice is in the X5. You've  
                  just picked Alice up from day care and you're on your way home.  
                  Alice is in her booster seat in the back of the car stopped in the middle

of the gateway bridge. And I'm asking myself in a panic in a cold sweat what the fuck is he thinking?

*Silence*

And then I see the ambulance arrive and there you are you're being taken away on a stretcher and some stranger is taking my child out of her booster seat. I could kill you.  
I could rip you to shreds.

*He breaks down, clinging to the African doll.*

*She listens.*

He            We had this little thing  
                 it was a little joke.  
                 She was always out there on that scooter.  
                 Riding up and down up and down the footpath.  
                 She loved that pink scooter.  
                 I'd see her every morning at the same time and before I got in the car  
                 I'd poke my tongue at her and she'd poke her tongue back and she'd  
                 giggle.  
                 I don't even remember looking behind me.  
                 It was all a haze.  
                 I don't remember any of it.  
                 It was my fault.  
                 And now she's gone.  
                 She's gone and it was my stupid fault.

*He picks up the African toy and hugs it desperately.*

He            I'm sorry  
                 I'm so sorry.  
                 I'm so sorry.

**Scene**

*Jack is playing a video game.*

*She enters and watches him.*

*Jack looks up to see his mother watching him.*

Jack            What?

*Jack is silent.*

She            Is there something you want to tell me?

Jack            No.

She            Are you sure?

*Pause.*

Jack           Yes.

She           I've just been speaking to your school principal Jack.

*Jack is silent.*

She           I know about the film.

*Jack stops playing.*

Jack           What film?

She           I think you know what film.

Jack           No.

She           I've seen it.

*Pause*

She           Why did you do that Jack?  
How could you do that to that little boy?  
He was terrified Jack.  
How could you do that?

*Jack shrugs.*

She           Did somebody tell you to do it?

Jack           No.

She           Someone made you.

Jack           Nope.

She           Someone must have forced you.

Jack           I wanted to do it.

She           Who was behind the camera?  
Who were they Jack?

*Jack is silent.*

She           The truth will come out.

There's going to be a full investigation.

Jack            So what?  
                  I won't say anything.

*Silence*

She            Thomas didn't tell you to take the knife to school did he?  
                  Thomas had nothing to do with it.

*Jack is silent.*

She            Did he?  
                  You tell me the truth Jack.

Jack            You wanted to think it.

She            What?

Jack            You did.

She            How dare you.

Jack            It was easy.  
                  Both of you believed it so easily.

She            Don't you turn this against us.  
                  You have done a terrible terrible thing Jack.

Jack            You're kicking them out of their own house.  
                  Their homeless.  
                  They've got nowhere to go.

She            You said Thomas told you to take the knife to school.  
                  I was trying to protect you.

Jack            Fail.

*She looks at Jack, devastated.*

Jack            Why are you looking at me like that?

She            I'm disgusted.  
                  I'm terribly disgusted with you Jack.

*Jack puts his arms out to his mother.*

Jack            Mum...

She            Don't.

*Jack is taken back.*

She            You're too old for that Jack.  
                  It's time you grew up.

*She leaves.*

Jack            Don't you like me anymore?

### **Scene**

*In the house Jack is playing X box.*

*He is holding the African doll staring into the dark.*

*She is watching out for Thomas*

*Thomas appears carrying boxes.*

*She races out after him.*

She            Thomas?

*Thomas goes to turn away.*

She            Thomas.  
                  Please.

*Thomas pauses.*

She            I want to apologise.  
                  I want to say sorry.  
                  Sorry on behalf of my son  
                  my husband.  
                  We have done a terrible thing.  
                  I have done a terrible thing.

*Thomas is silent.*

She            I hope you can forgive us.

*Thomas goes to walk away*

She            Wait.  
                  You can stay.  
                  Your family can stay here in this house for as long as you like.

Thomas        We do not wish to stay here any more.



She            Then please accept this.

Thomas        What is it?

She            A cheque  
                  it's for Acanit  
                  to take her home.  
                  You should have said you needed it.  
                  We would've given it in a second.  
                  Please take it.  
                  Take it.  
                  Please.  
                  Please.

Thomas        You know in Africa there are young elephants whose mothers have all been killed by very bad poaching. They are orphans and have seen terrible things. Their family killed in front of them. These young elephants do not know how to behave. They trample villages and block the roads for no reason. They do not like humans. Some say they want revenge for their suffering but I think it is because they do not know any better. They have not had mothers to teach them what is right.

*Pause.*

Thomas        One thing is for sure  
                  elephants never forget.

*Thomas walks away.*

*Jack puts down the XBOX controls and looks at the African doll.*

*Jack picks the African doll.*

*Light fades to a spot on Jack.*

Jack            Look Alice?  
                  It's your African friend.

*Jack throws the doll in the pool.*

*The splash of water.*

Jack            *I'm drowning. I'm drowning.  
                  Help me. Please help me.  
                  She's drowning Alice.  
                  Your friend is drowning.*

*Pause*

Why don't you save her?

*We see only Jack's face as he watches Alice crawl towards the water. A splash.*

*Darkness.*

*A woman's grief stricken cries echo the beginning of the play.*

*The sound of a Helicopter.*

*Silence.*

**END OF PLAY.**