

BELLA IN VISTA



BY TOM FOWLER

Bella in Vista

Author: Tom Fowler

Written in: 2013

Genre: Social-drama. Tragi-comedy.

Key Dramatic Influences: Gregory Burke. John Godber. John McGrath.

Length: 36 pages.

Running Time: 2h.

Summary: Set in and around 'Bella in Vista,' an Italian restaurant on the East coast of Scotland, the action revolves around the investigation of Iranian manager, and tax-evading fraudster, Majid Asadi; known as Marco Cucinotta. Though dubbed as being 'the most authentic Italian restaurant in Fife,' behind the façade lies a much darker, unsettling truth.

'See that's what this story's about. The unnoticed.'

Bella in Vista attempts to challenge our perception of authenticity, specifically in relation to gender and, consequently, gendered violence. As employees, locals and relations share their stories surrounding the restaurant and what allegedly happened on the 25th of July, 2012, it becomes clear the crime at hand indicates a deeper, wider injustice that concerns our nation, not just the local community.

The chefs; a local cab driver; a couple of American tourists; Marco's wife, his ex-wife – everyone has something to say. *But nobody said anything.*

Characters: *Bella In Vista* is written to be performed by a small cast of male actors, playing 17 characters between them. Marco, the restaurant manager and perpetrator of the sexual assault, does not feature. The play consists of a balance between monologues and group-scenes.

About the Author

Having lived in Scotland for nineteen years, despite being from English/Spanish descent, Tom Fowler identifies himself as a Scottish playwright. Just graduated from Warwick University with a First Class Honours degree in Theatre and Performance Studies, Tom is on the verge of commencing an MA in Playwriting at Royal Holloway.

Tom aspires to write theatre that;

1. Addresses a wide range of topical issues relevant to young people growing up in the United Kingdom.
2. Appeals to the dramatic desires of a wider community, without compromising artistic or aesthetic value.
3. Explores theatrical innovation whilst remaining grounded in socially or politically efficacious objectives.

Contact Details

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Characters

The Kitchen

Gregg
Will
Leon
Otto
Fraser

Other Characters

Chris
Richard
June
Alice
Reporter
Karen
Nyree
Matthew
Robin
Laurence
Ruth
Natalie

Staging

The play should be performed by **4-8 male actors**. For example, the character list can be divided as follows;

Gregg/Reporter – Actor 1

Chris/Matthew/Ruth/Nyree – Actor 2

Richard/Otto/Robin/Natalie – Actor 3

June/Karen/Fraser/Leon – Actor 4

Alice/Will/Laurence – Actor 5

The play should be performed as far as possible without décor, bar 2-4 chairs.

All props should be mimed.

All actors should remain onstage throughout the performance.

All scenes should be performed in immediate succession, without blackouts.

Scene One

Gregg *is a chef, in his early forties.*

Gregg: Good evening ladies and gentleman. Everyone ready to see some theatre? Aye? Good. Right, where do I start? Or where does the story start? Good question. See that's the thing, it started years ago eh, centuries ago when we learnt to write. To communicate. It started then. Aye it's not a new story, it's one of the oldest. The oldest, maybe, I don't know.

Gregg *points to an audience member.*

Gregg: He's regretting buying a ticket, I don't blame you. I would. Nah it's not a new story, you could have stayed at home. See you'll recognise all the characters. Aye they'll have different names, but you'll know them. They might be from different places, have different backgrounds but they're all the same. I mean we're all the fucking same aren't we? You'll know me. Aye you will, trust me.

He points to another audience member.

Gregg: He recognises me. He knows me, or thinks he knows me. That's it, you think you know me. If you didn't recognise me at first you're beginning to place me, trying to work me out. And based on what? My clothes? How I talk? My accent? My hair? Go on then guess. What do I do? What do I like? What do I eat? What films do I like? What books do I read? Do I read at all? Where do I work? What's my job? Did I hear someone at the back say astrophysicist? Nah of course I fucking didn't. But why? Why not? You don't fucking know, how could you?

Beat.

Gregg: Physics. The study of matter, how things work. I never got physics. Studying things we can't even see. Things that are working constantly, constantly in play and we can't even see them. Same with lots of jobs though eh? Working unnoticed. It's like my job, or last job anyway. I'm a chef. And that's the point in restaurants; I mean that's why people go to them in the first place, so you can eat a meal without having to do the work. The work's not meant to be noticed. You come in, you order, you sit down, order your food, maybe order a bottle of wine, maybe order two bottles of wine. Then you eat your food, maybe get a dessert, a coffee, pay, leave a tip if you can afford to and leave. The work is meant to go unnoticed. See while you're doing that, we're making your food and everyone else's, sweating like pregnant nuns all day, every day of the week, and every week of the year, apart from holidays; you know, a couple of weeks in January or a week over the summer sometimes. See that's what this story is about; the unnoticed and what's been unnoticed since men first started wearing trousers and women started wearing skirts, what is constantly going on today unnoticed. Why, last week, did I buy my nephew an action man and not a Barbie?

Points at an audience member.

Gregg: He knows what I'm on about eh? *(To audience member)* Why did my sister paint her spare bedroom blue when she found out she was having a boy, and not pink? See something's there, like the physics, working unnoticed. It's there; at work, at home, in schools, in the bar, at the gym, on

the telly, in the news, in the pictures...What makes us, what built and is constantly building us...is working right now, like us in this fucking kitchen, unnoticed.

Scene Two

Chris *is a taxi driver, in his mid-fifties.*

Chris: I'd never been myself, eh? Not for years after it opened. Never got round to it. I mean, I'd picked up plenty of folk coming from the place, and I never heard a bad word about it; about the food, about the service, about him. Never. It was one of those places. I'd booked to go about four times but that's the thing about the taxi business. You don't know when there's gonna be work. I'd book a table for Saturday night, and just before we set off I'd get a job in Edinburgh. I always eat out on Saturdays, every Saturday but usually I have to go to the chippy, eh? Where you don't need to book.

Beat.

Chris: So when I finally got round to it, to going - Aileen and I, we went on our anniversary, I wasn't working that day - and it was very good. Very good. A couple of people complain about the prices now and then but I tell them - I tell them, you're paying for authenticity. That's what you pay for. This is no Pizza Express, no ZiZi's, no Bella Italia. It's in a different league. *Bella In Vista* is family run. You're paying for the real deal. The food is real Italian, you know, not just pizza and pasta. I mean they do pizzas, pastas, calzones and all that but they do veal, steaks. The bar is fully stocked - prosecco, grappa, everything. And the walls - the walls are covered in photographs of the manager's family and ancestors. Not just the generic photos of Italy most places have. Marco's grandfather in uniform, his parents' wedding day, all that. And they've got a live band in the weekends, you know, traditional Italian music. It's the whole experience. If anyone asks me, where's good to eat around here? Where would I recommend? I always say *Bella in Vista*, always. First words out of my mouth every time. It's a popular place.

Beat.

Chris: But with success comes...criticism. In whatever it is you do - manage a restaurant, banking, teaching or taxi driving- whatever it is you do, with success comes criticism. If you make it big, people will always try and bring you down. Survival of the fittest and all' that. No one likes a threat. You know, love thy neighbours as long as they don't earn more than you. As long as they're wife's slightly less attractive. As long as they're not taking our jobs.

Beat.

Chris: No one likes a threat. So whatever these allegations are against Marco and the restaurant, I'm not buying them. I don't believe any of it. Someone's threatened. And they should be. It's an authentic Italian, the first we've had here, I'll tell you that! And that's what you pay for; authenticity. The real deal.

Scene Three

An American couple. Richard is in his late forties, June is in her mid-forties.

Richard: Every summer.

June: Most summers. Though not last summer.

Richard: Not – No, not last summer.

June: 2011, that was the last time we were here.

Richard: Most summers.

June: We stayed at the Golf Hotel, didn't we?

Richard: Yeah we did.

June: It was –

Richard: Well it was –

June: I mean the view was fantastic, wasn't it?

Richard: Yeah, it was. Fantastic.

June: The Library Suite, wasn't it?

Richard: Very spacious -

June: It was – Yes, very spacious.

Richard: With a sea view. I mean it would've been nice if it hadn't been raining the whole time but then it wouldn't be Scotland.

June: No –

Richard: It wouldn't be Scotland.

June: And we love Scotland, don't we?

Richard: One of my favourite places in the world. I always say that, one of my favourite places, don't I?

June: He does.

Richard: I said it last week. No place like it. And I travel a lot, with work.

June: He's head of a PR Firm.

Richard: Well that's – I mean it's not final, it's not yet - but yeah. I've seen the world, haven't I?

June: He has.

Richard: And I can say hand on heart, one of my favourite places.

June: And the hotel was amazing, wasn't it?

Richard: It was.

June: And it looks onto the course, so if you're coming here to play golf –

Richard: Well obviously they're coming here to play golf.

June: I know, but I'm just saying if that's your main priority –

Richard: Of course it will be. It's a pretty town, don't get me wrong –

June: His favourite place -

Richard: It's – exactly, my favourite place. But we come here for golf.

June: *You* come here for golf.

Richard: Everyone comes here for golf. My wife and I have always come here with some old friends of ours, Bill and Kathleen. I worked with him years back. One year we all wanted to go on holiday together, and our boss recommended this place so we looked it up.

June: On the internet.

Richard: Yeah and we saw pictures of the town, you know –

June: Of the beaches.

Richard: And the golf course and we said, what the heck? And it was great. Bill and I would play the course in the morning, the girls went to the spa. Then we'd walk around the town –

June: Sightseeing.

Richard: And then we'd go out for dinner, to that little Italian place -

June: *Bella in Vista*.

Richard: *Bella in Vista*, that's right.

June: Which was just fantastic. Really authentic.

Richard: It was a great week. So after that it sorta became a tradition, every summer.

June: Most summers. Not last summer.

Richard: No, not last summer. See last year, well...Bill and Kathleen were going through some...marital problems.

June: Bill left Kathleen for his secretary.

Richard: Now wait a second, June –

June: His male secretary, Ralph. A man.

Richard: Well...Yes. But good for him, that's what I say. He was obviously unhappy, now he's happy. Anyway so -

June: Good for him? What about her?

Richard: What about her?

June: Bill was cheating on Kathleen with his secretary for six months before he told her. Six months.

Richard: June, we don't need to go into -

June: Then Bill and Ralph moved to Portugal, leaving Kathleen alone in Boston. She's not even got any family there! She's wanted kids for the last ten years or so, he kept putting it off. Now she's alone, and probably will never have children. What an asshole.

Richard: Now hang on a second -

June: And he hasn't kept in touch with us. Not even a Christmas card!

Richard: You have to understand Bill was from a...conservative family. It took Bill a long time to come to terms with his...well with his...sexual preference -

June: Long enough to ruin Kathleen's life.

Richard: June -

June: I'm sorry, but it's true. Every time I tell the Bill and Kathleen story people say, good for him, and I'm sick of it! What about her? I just think if Kathleen had left Bill for a woman -

Richard: June, for god sake -

June: If Kathleen had left Bill for a woman, you wouldn't say 'good for her.' You wouldn't. You would say 'poor him.'

Richard: Can we talk about this another time?

Pause.

Richard: Well that's why we didn't make it last year. *(To audience)* Sorry, so the Italian place.

June: *Bella In Vista.*

Richard: *Bella In Vista*, right. Since that first time we've been every year.

June: Not last year.

Richard: No, not last year but most years. We love it. Marco, the manager, knows us. Once we turned up at about half ten, wasn't it?

June: Yeah, it was.

Richard: We'd been sightseeing all day –

June: In Edinburgh.

Richard: Nowhere else was open. So we turn up at this place. The chefs had started clearing up, you know, they'd stopped serving food but he said –

June: Marco.

Richard: Yeah, Marco said 'no problem,' and he gave us a table. We were the only people in the restaurant.

Beat.

Richard: So I don't know anything about tax evasion. The place seemed pretty clean.

June: It was authentic.

Richard: And whatever else he's accused of. I don't know about that. We know the guy, he *knows* us. And I don't think he'd...I mean he's not that sorta guy. Marco, and his wife –

June: Ruth.

Richard: Right, Ruth. Marco and Ruth. They were great, we loved them. They were always perfect, you know. They were the perfect double act. Every summer.

Beat.

June: Not last summer.

Richard: No...no, not last summer.

Scene Four

Alice is a student, in her mid-twenties.

Alice: It never bothered me. It didn't bother anyone really. Well, apart from Nyree but that's...I mean that's- that's different. She was different. She wasn't...normal. But no one else ever had any problems or complained or anything. It was his system, and it worked, you know? You can't say that it didn't – I mean, it worked. And 'If it ain't broke, why fix it?' We got paid bi-weekly, cash in hand. Obviously we knew that it wasn't – I mean we knew it wasn't legal but we didn't say anything – you know, we should have said something but...

Beat.

Alice: Well why would we complain? Cash in hand. No tax. Half of us were students, the other half were in this country illegally, basically. We needed a job, we needed the money. So why say something? Why would we say something? You know, he was a good boss, he was good to us. He was. He was loyal, understanding. If I ever needed a certain day or night off he gave it to me, no

trouble. After each shift we'd be fed, sometimes he'd let us drink left over wine. I've worked as a waitress in about five different places now and here they – Here, *Bella in Vista*, I was treated the best. What happened with Nyree was –

Beat.

Alice: She wasn't like us, like the rest of us; the waitresses. She wasn't. I don't – She didn't fit in, in the same way. I mean – It's not like she – I mean I don't think I – I don't...

Pause.

Alice: I don't really know what happened. All I know is that one moment she was working split shifts every day, for months over the summer, the next Marco starts cutting her shifts down until she – well until she left, eventually. She got a job at the Mexican restaurant by the Church. That's all I know for sure. But what she says – What she claims to have happened I don't –

Beat.

Alice: I think you have to take everything she says with a pinch of salt. You know, she wasn't normal. So I don't think you should take anything she says too seriously. Marco was good to us and I think she took it for granted. She was young. She didn't know. You don't bite the hand that feeds you. That's what I've learnt after four years of working at places like this; you don't, you just don't. She bit the hand and that's why she lost her job. That's what happens. I mean, you know, he could be a bit...inappropriate but he's a man. Sure, he flirted with us; we flirted back. But it was harmless, it was just – it was harmless. It never bothered me. It never bothered anyone, apart from her. Apart from Nyree. What does that say?

Scene Five

Reporter: *Bella in Vista* opened in May, 2008 and immediately caused a buzz among locals. The family run restaurant proved incredibly popular over the years, to both locals and tourists alike. Marketed as the town's only 'authentic' Italian restaurant, *Bella in Vista* was voted 3rd in The Courier's list, 'The 50 Best Restaurants in Fife.' Four years later, manager Marco Cucinotta, and the restaurant is under investigation for tax evasion –

The report fades out.

Gregg: *(To the audience)* 25th of July, 2012, at *Bella in Vista*. A couple of months before it all kicked off. It's a normal day, or as normal as they get here. It's about 11 in the morning. The first fag of the day.

Smoking alley behind the restaurant. Gregg and Leon are smoking. Leon is a Hungarian chef, and an ex-semi-professional football player in his early thirties.

Gregg: So I tell her – I tell her I'm still recovering from having ma heart broken, right? From losing the only thing I gave two shits about. I tell her how my ex-girlfriend fucked me up n'all that, and how she emotionally wounded me. You know, how it's been hard for me to move on, like; to be with

other women. I tell her she's the first girl I've kissed since; the first girl I've touched since, right? Cos before I couldn't bear touching someone that wasn't her, how it made me sick, and all that pish. And she says she's seeing a new side to me, an emotional side to me; a side she didn't expect. Then she talks about her own life, how she's been with some proper cunts and that. I tell her we've all been with a proper cunt at some point. She smiles. So we're lying there, and I'm holding her in my arms. Like I'm protecting her from all these cunts. Like I'm Humphrey Bogart and she's Ingrid Bergman. And then...and then she looks up at me, gives me that look, that look, right? You know, that fucking look. When she gives you that look you know, you know *then* you've just earned yourself the best fucking blowjob you've got in your life. *(Laughing loudly)* I'm fucking tell ye. The whole works, man. It was class.

Leon: Ex-girlfriend?

Gregg: Aye, ex-girlfriend. *(Translating)* Talking about my ex-girlfriend, to my new girlfriend, like eh?

Leon: New-girlfriend?

Gregg: Aye, new girlfriend. *(Talking slightly louder and annunciating more)* Talking about my ex-girlfriend to my new girlfriend got me laid, *(translating)* got me sex. Got me fucked.

Leon: *(Thinking)* Aah...fucked new girlfriend?

Gregg: Aye I fucked a new girlfriend. Last night.

Leon: *(laughing)* Nice.

Beat.

Gregg: *(Almost to himself)* We all do though, eh? Like, make our past sound better than it was. To girls. Tell our stories, like better than they were. Tell it like a film plot, so you come out better eh? So you're the victim. I mean, imagine if I'd told her how it was, how it really was. How would that sound, eh? How would that go down? *(As if talking to the 'new-girlfriend')* My last girlfriend, aye the one that broke my heart, well she was actually my wife, for six years. Six years, aye. I caught her fucking the neighbour. An arsehole lawyer from Aberdeen. We divorced six months ago. Nah, it's not very long, is it? It's not enough, is it? Six months. It's nothing. Aye, you're right, I probably am having a fucking breakdown. I mean, why the fuck dya think I'm pulling you? Eh?

Gregg wakes up. *Short pause.*

Gregg: I mean, you know...I mean, I still think of her, my ex-girlfriend, at night. You know, before I sleep eh? When I'm lonely. You know what I'm saying? *(Translating)* When I want sex. *(Exasperated)* When. I. Want. Sex. I think of my ex-girlfriend when I want sex.

Leon: Yes?

Gregg: Aye, when I want sex. I think of her then. I do think of her then. And when I see ma family, you know, cos they got on. She loved my parents. They always ask after her. So, you know, I think of her from time to time but...I mean, did she change ma life? No. Did she break ma heart? No. Did she emotionally wound me? Did she fuck. She was a fucking whore. I've taken shits more

memorable, eh? (*Mocking*) Broke my heart, like she broke my heart! She fucking emotionally stroked my arse with a feather, that's all she fucking did. That's the closest she got to here (*points at his heart*).

Gregg *thinks for a second, before remembering his point.*

Gregg: Aye but right, y'cant fucking tell 'em that can ye? Ye can't tell the story like that! Course ye fucking can't, course ye can't. I mean, what's better? If you were a lassie, what's better? (*Translating quickly*) If you were a girl, like, what would you want to hear? That, or the wounded thing- The whole fucking James Dean-like, tough exterior, but like that fucking – that fucking film, the fucking *Love Actually*, like that inside. You know, emotional and deep and that. That's what they want. Hard on the outside, soft in the inside. Like a cream egg. Like Rocky Balboa crossed with Elton fucking John. That's what they want. (*Back to Leon*) What do you think?

Leon *looks at Gregg, baffled.*

Gregg: What do you think? What. Do. You. Think? Oh for fu- you don't have a fucking clue what I'm saying do ye pal?

Gregg *gives Leon a thumbs up. Leon does it back.*

Gregg: Christ...I'm fucking pouring ma heart out to the fucking wall.

Long pause. Gregg finishes his cigarette.

Gregg: Right, I'll make the tiramisu.

Scene Six

Reporter: The investigation of Marco Cucinotta, and popular restaurant *Bella in Vista*, continues as new allegations have been made of the Italian manager. (*Fading out*) *Bella in Vista*, after opening in 2008, have only -

Gregg: (*To the audience*) It's about 1 o'clock in the afternoon. The weather's not shite for once so we'll be rammed in about twenty minutes eh? Second fag of the day.

Will, Otto, Leon and Gregg *are smoking. Otto is the Italian head chef, in his forties. Will is a university student in his 20's.*

Otto: I've worked with eh Marco for eh twenty years, on and off. I worked with him in his first place, an eh Italian café in Stirling, twenty years ago. Café Bella. Then...eh...since on and off. We are like eh Charles and Camilla. On, off, off, On, off, off, On, off. Now we are on.

Will: Whereabouts in Italy is he from? Marco, I mean. Rome?

Otto and Gregg *burst into hysterics.*

Gregg: Further East.

Will: San Marino?

Otto and Gregg *laugh again.*

Will: What? Venice?

Gregg: Majid Asadi was born in Tehran. In Iran, not Italy. He changed his name to Marco Cucinotta years ago, when he first got into the restaurant business, eh?

Otto: Cucinotta means eh little kitchen. We picked the name out of eh a hat.

Beat.

Will: Are you joking?

Gregg: Have you ever heard him speak Italian?

Will: Well, no but –

Gregg: Neither has anyone. Cos he's Iranian. He lived in Italy for, like, five years or so but he can't speak it. Come on. He just has to wear that fucking Prada suit, with the slick back hair and the moustache and the gestures and no one bats an eyelid. He's an Italian in their eyes, even if he never speaks a fucking word. When I first started working here this table started asking him where he was from, right? He used to correct them, back then, if they asked. So he goes, 'Iran.' And this woman's like, 'oh me and my husband go to Milan every summer.' And he's like, 'no Iran.' And she's like, 'yes, Milan! We love it there, don't we? Have you been to Venice?' So he gave up, made the most out of it, eh? Since then it's been an act. 'The only authentic Italian in town.' Authentic my ball sack.

Scene Seven

Karen *is Marco's ex-wife, in her late forties.*

Karen: Selfish. Self-obsessed. Vain. Arrogant. Petty. Hypocritical. Is that enough? *(Laughs)* Inconsiderate. Competitive, in an unhealthy way – he could be quite aggressive. Not in a physical way- I mean he never – he didn't – you know, he was just...he was just very driven. So driven he'd just lose sight of everything else; of important things, from bills to birthdays. They weren't important to him. Nothing was, besides the restaurants. And God, that was frustrating.

Beat.

Karen: He was always like that. Must be twenty years? No, twenty one years now, since we first met. He had just opened Café Bella, 'the only authentic Italian café in Stirling.' *(Laughs)* I was working in this awful pub down the road, The Well.

Beat.

Karen: I noticed him straight away, I mean it was impossible not to notice him. A young, handsome, charming Italian man on this side street in Stirling; he stood out like a sore thumb! Everyone was

always talking about him. I mean he looked like he'd just walked out of *The Godfather*, with the slick back hair and the suits. He looked ridiculous actually. But I didn't think so then. He was so charismatic. He had the presence of a film star, or a rock star. He was always showing off, you know, he always had to perform – he was always performing to somebody. To anybody. You know, he had to be the centre of attention, always. And he usually was. Which frustrated me. I mean not then, not at first, but eventually.

Beat.

Karen: *(Has forgotten her place)* Anyway, for a couple of months we knew of each other. We knew each other's faces – we'd say good morning, or smile at each other if we crossed paths during the day. But it was a while before he asked me out. When he did...

Beat.

Karen: I was seeing someone at the time. Nothing *too* serious. I mean we weren't married or thinking about marriage or anything like that. Murray; he was an estate agent. You know, he was – well...Nice. Successful, relatively. Nice. Gentle. Caring. A bit close with his mother, you know, but – well, nice. He was just nice. It'd been a couple of years and –

Beat.

Karen: *(Laughs nervously)* Well I started to dream about Marco, you know. Fantasise about him walking into the pub, after closing. He'd walk in and sweep me off my feet in that passionate, slightly aggressive Italian way. And then the two of us, alone, in this empty pub would – well we'd...*(Laughs)* Like in *Mills and Boon* or something. I don't know, it seems silly thinking about it now.

Pause.

Karen: I guess I wanted someone to really want me. Not how Murray wanted me. I mean, he cared about me – he loved me but...I wanted a *man*, a real man. And that's what Marco was. A real man.

Beat.

Karen: So one day he comes into the pub. And you know, we'd flirt a little each time I served him. *(Laughs)* I remember, every time he came up to the bar I'd fight the others girls to make sure I served him. He asked who I was, why we hadn't spoken properly before. How it was a shame we hadn't met sooner. He told me I should work for him if I ever got bored of the pub. Told me if I worked for him, I'd have the customers flooding in to be served by me. Then when he was at his table, I kept catching him looking at me. Watching me. And then after last orders he came over and asked me out. For the next night.

Beat.

Karen: And I'll never forget that night. Our first date. I'd made plans that night already with Murray but of course I cancelled them to meet Marco. We'd arranged to meet at this trendy bar he'd heard about. *Rio's*, I think it was called. So I got there a little early. And I was so nervous but – Well -

Beat.

Karen: He didn't show up. The bastard. I was there for half an hour before I gave up. Business related, of course. I can't remember what it was, but it was work-related. So I walked home and that night I – I cried. God, I was so angry. I cried my eyes out. I never told him that, obviously. I would never give him that satisfaction. *(Laughs gently)* Whenever we talked about that night after – later down the line, I told him I'd gone to see Murray that night instead. I never told him the truth. That he made me cry that night.

Beat.

Karen: Didn't take much to convince me to give him another chance. A week later I found myself at *Rio's* again, having lied to Murray...again. *(Laughs)* But this time Marco showed up and it was – well how I'd imagined it would be really. And he was how I'd imagined him. He was funny, in that sort of confident, cocky way. He was charming, sexy...Then later he walked me home and we kissed for the first time. Our first kiss. He kissed me how I'd imagined he'd kiss me. You know, hard but sensitive. Passionately. Like a man, a real man. And a week later when he took me out again, he...well, he made love to me how I'd imagined he'd make love to me. And two years later...

Beat.

Karen: Two years later, we were married. And it was really good, it was. Not for long but – for a while it really was. It was like I was the quiet girl from Fife who'd tamed this Italian beast. *(Laughs)* It was the fantasy. Not long after that the novelty of it all began to wear off I think. You know, the fantasy turned out to be - well a fantasy. The passion, the 'Italian passion' turned out to be lust, which was soon replaced by the constant arguing and the fighting, and – and...

Pause.

Karen: Well, a couple of years after that he met Ruth and we divorced.

Long pause.

Karen: I loved Marco, I did. When he wanted to be he could be caring. Romantic. Compassionate. Thoughtful. Sweet, sometimes. But selfish. He was always selfish and I think that's why we – I mean that's why it fell apart. So that would be my answer. That was his worst quality.

Beat.

Karen: I ran into Murray a couple of months ago actually whilst visiting my parents. He still lives in Stirling. Still an estate agent. Married, to a lawyer from Dublin. Christine. They've got three children; three daughters. He seemed happy.

Beat.

Karen: When he asked me how I was doing I lied. Told him I was great, married to a surveyor from Kirkcaldy called Phil. I told him we have two children, a boy and a girl. Rupert and Lisa. When he said he and Christine were looking into private education for theirs, I said we were thinking of doing the same for ours. He recommended some schools, I told him I'd look into it. He asked me what my

thoughts were on the Scottish Higher system, said Christine wanted the children to go somewhere that did A Levels. I told him we hadn't thought that far ahead yet, and he understood.

Beat.

Karen: I talked to him for about ten minutes. About my fictional life. About my fictional husband, and my fictional children. My fictional worries about the state schools near my area. By the end of the conversation I almost believed myself. Or wanted to believe myself. He invited us, Phil and I, and the kids, over for lunch. Any time, he said. And I wanted to go. I wanted to bring Phil and the kids, talk more about the education system. About whether any of mine were being bullied. About *that* fantasy.

Beat.

Karen: But that's just it. That's all it was. Fantasy.

Scene Eight

Will is a student in his early twenties.

Will: I was taller than him. That was his problem with me. I was taller, and it bothered him. I used to spot him watching me work with this look on his face – I don't know, it was like he was sizing me up; like he was comparing us in his head. I unsettled him, I never really understood it. It was bizarre. But then the next minute I'd be his best friend. I'd make him laugh all the time, not deliberately. I mean I was quite clumsy. And it was my first job, so I wasn't always...well his best employee.

Beat.

Will: He used to say to the waitresses, 'Will's so funny.' 'Will should be a comedian.' All of this. He'd never say things like that if we were on our own, but if people were around, we were this comic duo apparently; him being the cheeky, charming prankster obviously; me being the bumbling, clumsy moron. So I was always on edge. I could never tell if he was joking or not. Each day it was a complete gamble whether I was going to be his favourite comic or a rival in his constant battle for attention. For example...

Beat.

Will: He always used to joke about making me work on my days off. You know, trying to make me think he was going to take my day-off away from me last minute. That was one of his classics. I just had to respond sincerely until I knew for sure he was joking. Then I'd laugh loudly, keep him thinking he was this undiscovered comic genius and it was fine. After the 15th time or so I got quite good at safely assuming he was just joking again, without rubbing him the wrong way. Now my 20th birthday was coming up, and I asked him weeks in advance for the day-off. 'Of course,' he said and that was fine. So I organised my birthday. I'd go out for lunch with my family, not to *Bella in Vista* obviously, and then go out to Dundee with my mates at night.

Beat.

Will: Every day for the next two weeks I put up with this cracker of a joke. ‘You’re working on the 12th right?’ ‘On the 12th you’ll do a split shift right?’ ‘On the 12th you’ll run the restaurant by yourself, right?’ And each time it was quickly followed by his booming, terrifying laugh. Anyway so I worked all day on the 11th. And after, once the customers had all left, when it reached midnight all the waitresses sang me happy birthday. They’d got me a card which they had all signed, it was really nice. During this Marco’s just sitting at his table, right? Not joining in. Not singing or anything, just watching this happen. Watching me. About five minutes later he comes up to me, privately – no one else can hear – and says, ‘so tomorrow you start at 11, right?’ And so I laugh in his face, expecting the booming laughter to start any second. When it doesn’t, I quickly turn to see him looking deadly serious. ‘I’ll give you the night off, but you start at 11, ok? I’ll let you off at 4.’ I was still expecting the laughter to start, so I stayed silent waiting for the punch line. Eventually I had no choice but to fill the silence – I don’t know, part of me thought I was just going along with this slightly more elaborate version of the classic joke. So I said ok and he walked off back to his table.

Beat.

Will: I worked on my birthday. The prick made me work on my birthday! My family went on *my* birthday lunch without me, as my brother had got time off work especially for it. And then the fucker made me start early the day after, it was horrible.

Beat.

Will: See I think he felt threatened by me. Genuinely. Marco had to be ‘the man’ of the restaurant. He had to be dominating the atmosphere always. Sometimes I think that was more important to him than the restaurant doing well. He wanted the female attention in the restaurant to be on him, permanently. And I think he saw me as the biggest threat as a rival for this attention. Not because the rest of the kitchen staff weren’t catches or anything. I was by the far the least manly. But besides Gregg none of them could speak English. I mean, you know, enough to have a fairly basic, vacuous conversation, sure; to flirt on a very basic level, but not enough to properly talk with any of the waitresses. And Gregg...well, he was that bit older. And he was balding.

Beat.

Will: So I think I posed as the biggest threat to replace him as king of the pride. You know, Marco was charming, confident, masculine or whatever. But basically all the waitresses were students, like me. My age. Sure he could tease them. He could proposition them in jest and get away with it. He was your typical alpha male. But I’d make them laugh. I’d take an interest in their lives. We could talk about music, films, aspirations. We had things in common. I could connect with them in way he never could. And he knew that. And it threatened him.

Beat.

Will: What? Me? I mean...Well, no. None of the waitresses ever slept with *me*, but...

Pause.

Will: Yeah, I know for a fact he cheated on Ruth with at least two of the waitresses. Probably three actually. Margarita, she was Italian. I used to hear them talking in the store cupboard. Beth, she was a bit older. But I think she started to really like him, so he cut her shifts. And then there was Nyree, but that's...I mean that's...

Beat.

Will: Well that's different. She was different.

Scene Nine

Reporter: The sexual assault allegations made of restaurant manager Majid Asadi are still under investigation. Asadi, initially accused of tax evasion, was later accused of sexual assault by waitress, and university student, Nyree Chalmers. Nyree is said to be giving her testament in court tomorrow. In other news –

Gregg: Twenty five past three. Lunch is done. It gets quiet now, eh? In between shifts. We're fully booked tonight though. And it's all hush hush but apparently we've got a celebrity in tonight, so Marco's being a cunt. Matthew Dent; that English actor, in all those romantic comedies. *(To a male audience member)* Aye he's shite eh? But I bet your mum loves him, am I right? Or your teenage daughter? Wanker. He's here golfing, of course, and he's booked a table at *Bella in Vista* tonight. As you can guess, it's caused a bit of a fuss. Third fag of the day.

Gregg *is smoking.* **Nyree**, a sociology student in her early twenties, enters. *She does not smoke.*

Gregg: You're early.

Nyree: Marco called me in. Apparently Matthew -

Gregg: Aye, Matthew Dent, so I've heard. And what? You know when he comes up here he books a table at everywhere in town for the same time, and then last minute chooses one. There's a dozen managers in town right now flapping about, cleaning the place up for him and he'll only turn up to one. He's an arsehole.

Nyree: A talented, famous arsehole.

Gregg: Famous, fine. But fuck off is he talented.

Nyree: He's gorgeous.

Gregg: Aye, and that's a talent is it?

Nyree: It's something.

Gregg: It's nothing, that's what it is. Not really. He's not an actor, is he? He's just pornography for the underage. And the overage.

Nyree: Jealous?

Gregg: Ha! Aye, right. Jealous? Fuck off. Give him five years, see what he's doing then, eh? He'll be

-

Nyree: Working somewhere like here?

Beat.

Gregg: Well, no but – you know – you know what I mean.

Nyree: No, I know what you mean.

Beat.

Gregg: I'm leaving here though. Any day now, I'm just waiting on the call eh? I won't be here in five years. The –

Nyree: Oil rig, I know.

Gregg: Aye. Making thirty grand a year or so.

Nyree: Sorry, I didn't mean – I had a really nice time last night.

Beat.

Gregg: Me too.

Voice: (*Offstage*) Nyree!

Nyree: Coming! I should go in, before he kicks off.

Gregg: Aye. What time you finishing?

Nyree: I'm not sure, Marco wants me on late. You?

Gregg: I'm off at ten. Fancy coming over? Watch a film or something.

Nyree: A Matthew Dent film?

Gregg: If it means you'll come.

Voice: (*Offstage*) Nyree!

Nyree: Coming. I'll -

Voice: (*Offstage*) Nyree!

Nyree: I'm coming! (*To Gregg*) Jesus! Sorry, I'll call you when I finish.

Gregg: Alright.

She kisses him. Nyree exits. Gregg smokes alone.

Scene Ten

Matthew Dent is a foppish actor in his late thirties. He is incredibly drunk.

Matthew: People say I can only do one thing, right? People say – they say I'm all about the looks – that I'm only famous because of my looks. You know, people don't consider me a serious actor. They say I'm just a poster boy. Well what I say to those people....What I'd say - I'd say, haven't you ever heard of multi-tasking? Huh? Do you know what I mean? You know, why can someone only be one of those things? I mean there are attractive men who can't act, of course. And there are lots and lots of ugly actors. Loads of them. But that doesn't mean someone can't be both, does it? Does it?

Beat.

Matthew: No, it doesn't. And people say that I'm just this fucking poster boy – this fucking – sorry, have any of you got a lighter? I've lost mine. No? Oh here it is. (*Lighting cigarette*) What was I saying? Yes, poster boy. People are constantly writing on the internet that I'm – Matthew Dent is this talentless poster boy, and what I say to that – What I say to these people is...Go fuck yourselves. How do you know I can't act if I haven't been given the opportunity? I haven't been given the opportunity, but multitasking – If I were given the opportunity to multitask, like a woman, then I would show them that I am not just a poster boy, but an incredibly talented actor also. Do you know what I mean?

Beat.

Matthew: What? Italian restaurant? What Italian restaurant? I don't know what you're – I'm not Italian. Oh right, yes. Where? What? Speak English for Christ's sake. Oh right, yes. Yes, sorry. Italian restaurant. Slept with one of the waitresses? When? Tonight? No? A year – Oh, right, yes. After the restaurant. Yes, I remember. The manager, I remember him. Yes, he was a real character. Italian, wasn't he? Yes, we stayed late, drinking after the restaurant closed, with the manager. Everyone had gone home, all of the customers and all of the staff. It was just us, and two waitresses. The four of us, yes. I remember. And then – and then I slept with one of them? Did I? Yes. Yes, the blonde one. No? Yes, the blonde one. Yes, back to my hotel I imagine. Do I know what happened after where? After what? In the restaurant? No, I was in the hotel. Wasn't I? Yes. Oh, right. Yes, no I haven't been back since. No.

Beat.

Matthew: That's a character I would be able to play, to prove that I could (*hiccupping*) – that I could...

He drops the cigarette. He struggles to pick it up. When he has, he starts talking again.

Matthew: Multitask. I could play him. What? He did what? Wait, what are you talking about? The manager? Italian? That night?

Beat.

Matthew: Why did he have to do that? She was drunk, wasn't she?

Scene Eleven

Robin and Laurence are both lecturers in their forties.

Robin: I think you'll agree when I say, essentially, we are talking about performativity.

Laurence: No, you're right.

Robin: Laurence and I teach at the university.

Laurence: In the sociology department.

Robin: We specialise in gender studies.

Laurence: Well generally, Robin also teaches a module on the performance of ethnicities.

Robin: Yes, I guess more generally you could say we deal with the construction of identities.

Laurence: Generally, yes.

Robin: Laurence and I, and Carol McKenzie make up the gender studies unit within the department.

Laurence: But Carol primarily focuses on Queer Studies.

Robin: But, uh...Yes, so I think Laurence would agree with me when I say, I think there is definitely a need to analyse Marco's behaviour in relation to performance theory.

Laurence: Definitely.

Robin: Specifically in regards to gender, and the performance of masculinity. You know, I think it sheds a significant amount of light on the whole situation.

Laurence: Especially with the fact that Marco *is* actively performing whenever he is in view of his customers –

Robin: Yes, of course.

Laurence: You know, if the kitchen is his backstage, then we can perceive the restaurant itself as his stage – as onstage -

Robin: Hmm.

Laurence: A stage where not only does he perform to us as this charismatic, alpha-male manager, but where he embodies a completely fictional persona.

Robin: And nationality.

Laurence: Exactly. It is, in all senses of the word, a performance. Which is why Marco and the restaurant present us with a fascinating example to demonstrate how gender and identity are performed.

Robin: If you think of Judith Butler's writing – the idea that gender is an unstable identity, constantly in flux, instituted and constantly reinforced through the stylised repetition of acts.¹

Laurence: These acts are anything you associate with a particular gender. From the pint, being a symbol of masculinity, to a handbag being a symbol of femininity.

Robin: And these acts are performed to create the impression of an identity or a self, when in reality there is no inner self. It is all purely on the surface.

Laurence: For example, you could say women shave their legs to perform 'femininity.'

Robin: Well I'm not sure Carol does.

Robin laughs. Laurence does not.

Laurence: But uh - yes, similarly men do not shave their legs to perform their masculinity.

Robin: And this is social discourse functioning, you see? Why is a man who has shaved his legs unmanly? What we deem masculine or un-masculine, you'll find, has no real basis behind it. No reasonable logic. The gendered interpretation of colours is also an insightful example; blue as male, pink as female. There is no logical reason for that association, one which is completely ingrained within our culture. It is purely social discourse, reinforced by the media, by industry, and most importantly, by us.

Laurence: From a young age we are taught or exposed to these associations. We are taught or exposed to the characterisation of each gender. 'Boys don't cry,' 'Girls don't get dirty,' 'Boys don't dance.' 'Girls don't fight.' We construct our own gender, and continue to perform these gendered routines – these stylised acts as a result of our human longing to be desired. Desire is what motivates us to continue to perform these acts, to reinforce these associations.

Robin: For example, if you weren't already aware, now you may know that shaving, or not shaving your legs to perform masculinity, or femininity, is illogical and ungrounded. However, correct me if I am wrong, you will continue to shave, or not shave, in order to be recognised as masculine, or feminine, by the other. In order to be desired. Men will continue to not shave to be thought manly, and thus 'attractive,' whilst women will continue to shave for the same reason.

Laurence: We are constantly told what makes an 'attractive' man or woman by films, by television programmes and advertising campaigns. And this changes over time. What kind of woman, or what kind of clothes a woman should wear in order to be attractive is different now to what it was twenty years ago. Even ten years ago.

Robin: This is what I alluded to earlier when I described gender as being 'in flux.'

Laurence: We realise this is very much an overview.

Robin: Yes, of course.

¹ Butler, Judith. "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution" in Bial, Henry (ed). *The Performance Studies Reader* (Oxon: Routledge, 2007) p. 187

Laurence: When you delve into the subject it all becomes more problematic, more complicated. This is just -

Robin: A digested version, if you will.

Laurence: A - Yes, exactly. *(To audience)* Is this specific enough?

Robin: It should be, surely? If it's just an overview you want –

Laurence: Is this alright?

Beat.

Laurence: Ok. So front of house, the Iranian manager is actively performing as this charismatic, Italian. He performs deliberate Italian stereotypes, and dresses how popular culture depicts the Italian man, and thus we don't question his nationality, of course. Therefore, he doesn't need the language because he performs stylised acts that we have come to associate with the Italian identity. As a result, we accept his faux-nationality willingly. However – here is where it becomes slightly more complicated – backstage, when he believes he is no longer performing - in the kitchen, he believes he is being the real him. Being himself. But there is no 'himself.' There is no self. It is all on the surface.

Robin: Which is why you would refer to gender, nationality, or life in general as performative –

Laurence: As opposed to, as a performance –

Robin: Because performance suggests that it can end, that there comes a point where you are no longer performing. A couple of months ago I treaded the boards in the Amateur Dramatic Society's production of *Hamlet* –

Laurence: As Hamlet.

Robin: Yes, as Hamlet. Every evening for the week we were on, I would enter onstage as Hamlet and I would perform as Hamlet. However after the curtain call and the standing ovation, backstage I would no longer be Hamlet, as the performance would be over. Thus, to describe gender as a performance would be inaccurate. In this context, for example, it would suggest that Marco in the kitchen, backstage, is being purely himself, not influenced by anything. Not influenced by his upbringing or the media –

Laurence: Which is of course impossible.

Robin: Which is why, then, what we're talking about here is performativity. Performative; we are constantly performing because we are never not performing.

Laurence: Performativity.

Robin: Performativity. Exactly.

Beat.

Laurence: In terms of the allegations I – Well I-

Pause.

Laurence: If they are true then – Well, that’s awful. That’s just – just awful. I actually know Nyree, not well but she’s – she’s a student of mine. She was always vocal, very opinionated. She definitely had a reputation amongst the department, and what may have happened to her is...awful, if it did indeed happen. But –

Beat.

Laurence: If Marco is guilty of – of what he’s been accused of, then it is important to remember he is purely a product of upbringing, of social, cultural and historical construction. Our whole individual outlook relies so heavily on what we are exposed to from a young age, I believe – I if we are constructions of our own surroundings then –

Beat.

Laurence: Then I don’t think Marco is fully accountable for his actions. For whatever he may have, or may not have done. He’s –

Robin: Now wait, Laurence –

Laurence: I’m not justifying his behaviour, of course I’m not. I just – I believe...

Pause.

Laurence: (*Robin is attempting to interrupt but Laurence is ignoring him*) Do you blame Frankenstein or the monster? That’s the question. I do not believe that Marco is solely responsible for what may have occurred. I don’t, no.

Robin is silent.

Laurence: However hard that is to accept, I believe it true.

Uncomfortable silence.

Scene Twelve

Gregg: Can I smoke in here? Aye, cheers pal.

Gregg lights a cigarette.

Gregg: I never believed in horoscopes or any of that shite. Never; none of it. That some fucking sign can tell you who I am. Who I am compatible with. How I’m gonna feel today. How I’m gonna feel tomorrow. Where I’m gonna be tomorrow. (*Laughs*) My ex, before Nyree, would read them to me every fucking day. She swore by them. She lived her life by them, it was a joke. Once she came up to me and asked me if everything was ok, right, cos’ she read that Leos might be experiencing romantic difficulties and struggling to talk about them. So I told her I wasn’t, and that she shouldn’t believe any of that wank. Then she goes off on one - telling me I need to learn to open up or it could damage our relationship permanently. She was just quoting the fucking magazine!

Beat.

Gregg: No one makes you who you are but you. I used to believe that, eh? Horoscopes, fate, karma; all just a way of dealing with everything, that's what I used to say. All ways of telling yourself, you know, do your best but if you fuck it up, it wasn't your fault. You never had a say in the matter, and all that pish. Nah, we all know what we're doing, I'd say. We all make choices and we live with it. Everyone should own up to fucking up their own lives. We all make our own choices, that's what I'd say.

Beat.

Gregg: But now I'm not so sure. Cos sometimes we don't make our own choices, do we? Other people make them for us. Sometimes it doesn't matter what you choose, or what you don't choose. It's chosen for you, right. And when that starts happening it gets harder to believe that you're the one behind the wheel. That you're getting any say in what happens to you.

Beat.

Gregg: It's different for different folk though, eh? Aye, some people get more choices than others, like. Some people can afford that luxury; fuck about all they want and know it's all gonna turn out alright. Another gap year here, another gap year there, who gives a fuck? Daddy's got me a job lined up, Daddy's bought me a flat in Paris, all of that. And you know what, good for them. If you've got the choice, why not, eh? If you've been dealt a good hand, fucking play it, right? Good for them. But I never got much of a choice.

Pause.

Gregg: I never got much of a choice, right? Fine. But if I were to walk outside right now and fucking lamp the first cunt I saw, fucking batter the bastard that would be me doing that, not anyone else. That would be me, making that choice. That would be fucking me. And where I grew up, or didn't grow up, would have nothing to do with that. Not a fucking thing. It might be important – might be a reason eh, but that wouldn't be what to blame. I'd be what to blame. There is no excuse...There is no excuse. Not for what Marco did.

Scene Thirteen

Reporter: The investigation of Majid Asadi continues as additional sexual assault complaints are increasingly being made against the Iranian manager. Hannah Baillie, a former waitress, spoke out yesterday, as she –

Gregg: Quarter to six, waiting on the first sitting, before it all starts again, eh? Matthew Dent's booked for nine, so Marco, or Ruth on Marco's behalf, has got all the waitresses to...well to make an effort. Know what I'm saying, like? I'm talking hair, make up, lipstick, push-up bras, skirts pulled up more than usual...Aye, the works. Just for some fucking wanker.

Beat.

Gregg: In the kitchen, nothing's changed, eh? Fourth fag of the day.

Gregg and Leon are smoking.

Gregg: No fucking way.

Leon: Yes.

Gregg: You serious? For the national team? For the national – (*Annunciating*) For the Hungary team?

Leon: Yes, for second team.

Gregg: Still though, more than any of us have ever done, eh? You've kept that quiet. There was me thinking you were a useless bastard.

Will enters.

Gregg: You heard this?

Will: What?

Gregg: Leon played football for Hungary.

Will: No way?

Gregg: Aye.

Will: For the national team?

Gregg: The second team, like.

Will: Still.

Gregg: I know.

Will: What position did you play in?

Gregg: (*Annunciating*) Position, what position? Offence, defence.

Leon: Position?

Gregg: Aye, where did you play, like?

Leon: What do you think?

Gregg: You want me to guess, like?

Leon: Yes, guess.

Gregg: Alright, I say...left back, or a centre back. In defence.

Leon: Defence?

Gregg: Aye.

Leon *smiles*.

Leon: *(To Will)* You?

Will: Yeah defence, or midfielder. Maybe a winger.

Leon: Winger?

Gregg: Aye, attacking midfielder, you know?

Leon *smiles again*.

Leon: Goalkeeper.

Will: Really? That's amazing, man. I can't believe it.

Gregg: Aye, what the fuck are you doing *here*?

Leon: What?

Gregg: What the fuck are you doing *here*? *(Annunciating)* Why are you here? Why do you no play football anymore? What happened?

Leon: I don't play now.

Gregg: Aye, I guessed that much. I mean why don't you – oh, forget it. That's as much as we're gonna get, eh?

Will: I can't believe it though.

Gregg: Aye.

Pause.

Gregg: You got a plan, like? After you finish uni or whatever?

Will: No, not really. Not washing dishes, at least. I might travel for a bit, I'm not sure. You know, take some time out; think about my options.

Beat.

Will: Have you got any plans? You know –

Gregg: Aye, I'm waiting on a call. Any day now, and I'll be off, catering on the rigs, eh? Pays well, like.

Will: Have you told Marco?

Gregg: Have I fuck.

Will: His face when you tell him -

Gregg: Aye, it'll be class.

They put their cigarettes out.

Gregg: Right, let's go. Round 1.

Scene Fourteen

Leon and Gregg.

Leon: I speak Hungarian?

Gregg: Aye, they'll dub over it after.

Leon: Dub?

Gregg: Aye, speak in Hungarian. They'll translate it and put it on top, like. That's what you'll do, eh? Aye.

Leon: Hungarian?

Gregg: Aye, for fuck sake. In Hungarian.

Leon, now being 'dubbed over,' talks in an English accent, in a news reporter-esque fashion. Gregg is sat next to him, unaware of what he is saying.

Leon: Marco was always good to me. He gave me work, found me a place to live. He lets me have time off when my daughter comes to visit. So he never gave me a reason to be annoyed with him. I knew he would often see other girls behind the back of his wife but I felt like it wouldn't be in my place to say anything. Also, as I struggle to speak English, my words could easily be misinterpreted. I feel now, maybe I should have said something.

Pause.

Leon: I was the last person to leave the kitchen on the night that it happened. We had a famous person in the restaurant, so I was working later than usual. All the other chefs left at about 11, but I had to clean up so I finished later. When I finished, Marco invited me to have a beer with him, Nyree, Margarita and the celebrity. I sat with them for an hour or so, before I decided to go home. Nyree asked me to stay another hour, until Marco let the waitresses finish so she could walk home with me. But I was tired, so I left. I regret leaving now. When I was with them, I noticed Marco was showing his attraction towards Nyree. But he is like that with all of the waitresses every day, so I did not think anything of it. He was very drunk. So was the other man.

Beat.

Leon: I didn't know Marco did what he did until everybody was talking about it. I am glad I don't work there anymore. When it happened, all I could think about was what I would do if someone did that to my daughter. I don't know what I'd do, but the man definitely wouldn't be alive now. My sympathies are with Nyree and her family, and I hope Marco will pay for what he did to them.

Pause. Leon is no longer being dubbed, returning to talk in his Hungarian accent.

Gregg: You done?

Leon: Yes.

Scene Fifteen

Ruth is Marco's wife, in her early fifties.

Ruth: I don't have anything to say. There's nothing left to say. I mean there is, but you're not listening. No one's listening. You've made your mind up already, haven't you? You have, of course you have. Why wouldn't you? You've read a headline, so you know the whole fucking story, don't you? It's the same, it's always the same. He's a rapist now, is he? You didn't even know him - you didn't know him, but someone wrote it in a newspaper so that's golden, is it? You know best? Well, he was my husband. He was *my* husband, and I am telling people – I am telling you that Marco was not – what they're saying he was. He was not. He was many things...He was...But – but he's innocent here, and that lying little slut is going to get found out. Trust me. Sorry, is this not good enough for you? Not what you were expecting? You wanted a sob story, didn't you? You wanted the poor, miserable wife crying and losing it for five minutes; you wanted to see someone suffer, didn't you? That could be the advert. That woman's fucking life; that could sell, and all of that. It's sick. You should be ashamed of yourselves. Aye, you. No, don't stop the camera. I want you to listen to what I have to say, for Marco's sake. Cos he didn't get a fucking say in any of it. Did he? This girl was not right. Nyree - she was not all there, she was twisted. I saw it as soon as she started working for us. She was manipulative, I saw it.

Beat.

Ruth: I always knew...

Beat.

Ruth: I knew they were seeing each other. I knew they – knew that they were meeting, after work. For months. Marco and Nyree. Of course I knew. I saw the way he looked at her. I saw the way she looked at him. Eventually I took his phone, saw the texts. And it's – I mean that was...

Beat.

Ruth: On the 24th of July, I confronted him about it. I sat him down, made him tell me the truth. Made him tell me how many times, what they did. What they said. And he did. He told me everything. He told me about each time. I told him if he saw her again, I'd leave him and I'd leave the restaurant. I'd leave him, I would. But I bet you think I wouldn't? Eh? That's what you want to here, isn't it? The poor woman, who loved him too much to leave him, even if he was fucking a waitress behind her back. That's what you want to see – want to film, isn't it? That would be a nice addition to the documentary. Well, I would've left him, I would've. And he knew it, when I said it. He knew it, he could see it in my eyes. And he looked at me, and begged me to forgive him. He

swore he would never do anything again to hurt me, and would do anything to make up for it. To say sorry.

Beat.

Ruth: I forgave him. On the 25th of July, the day Nyree says he – says he abused her, Marco was off to dump the slut. To break it off. He ended it, and she couldn't handle it. She'd lost him, she knew she'd lost him, to me. And she was competitive, Nyree; she was twisted. She couldn't stand losing. So she did this. She told a story, a vicious little lie. Well I hope she sees this, and realises what's she's done. And I hope she's proud. No, I hope she hates herself. That she despises herself. I wouldn't waste your time on her, no point interviewing her. She's got nothing to say. But she'll lie. To impress somebody; *anybody* who'll listen. She's a petulant child. But you won't believe that. You won't believe anything I say, because you don't want to. That would be an anti-climax, wouldn't it? To your entertainment. That's not how you want it to end. But that's the truth. That's the truth. But that's – Well, you won't listen. So there's nothing left to say.

Scene Sixteen

Reporter: The investigation of restaurant manager Majid Asadi has been put on hold temporarily, as the Iranian born manager was hospitalised last night in a traffic collision outside Cupar. Reports speculate the accident was alcohol induced. The investigation is expected to recommence –

Gregg: Half past nine. Matthew Dent's here. Aye, a' know, but I don't have to see him, eh? Fraser, on the other hand...Fraser's this kid who works here on the weekends, washing dishes. A real pain in the arse. His mum's friends with Ruth or something, that's how he got the job. Fifth fag of the day.

Gregg and Fraser are in the smoking alley. Fraser is a seventeen year old kitchen porter.

Fraser: So this guy's coming up to my mate, right? And we're just getting chips, eh? We're not doing nothing or anything, just waiting in the queue. And this guy, he's like five years older than us. And he starts talking all this shite, how he was in front of us. Just total bollocks. So Robbie's like, 'you messing pal?' And this arsehole – he's fucked right, he can barely stand – he's getting in Robbie's face. And he pushes him. So me and Mark are backing him up, eh? And Robbie starts shouting, 'Let's take this outside you fucking cunt.' This guy pushes him again, so Robbie grabs him and throws him outside. And he goes over straight away, trips on the pavement, like. So Robbie starts kicking him while he's down, then he just fucking sits on his chest and just starts pounding him. Fucking smashing his face, beating the shit out of him. Eventually we got him off the wanker, went back to Mark's before anyone saw something, eh? But it was fucking class.

Pause.

Fraser: You got a spare fag?

Gregg: Fuck off.

Fraser: Aw come on, I won't tell anyone you gave it me.

Gregg gives him a fag.

Fraser: Cheers.

They smoke.

Fraser: I bet you've been in loads of fights, eh? Aye, bet you have. And I bet you've never lost one as well. Nah, boys like us don't lose fights, am I right?

Long pause.

Fraser: So last night, I was shagging this bird –

Gregg: What bird?

Beat.

Fraser: What?

Gregg: What bird? What was her name, like?

Fraser: You don't know her, eh?

Gregg: Aye, but what was it?

Beat.

Fraser: Nicole.

Gregg: Nicole what?

Fraser: What?

Gregg: Nicole what? Her second name, what is it?

Fraser: I don't know. How am I supposed to know?

Gregg: You know her from school, don't ye?

Fraser: Well yeah, but –

Gregg: But you don't know her second name? She not in your class?

Fraser: Aye. Well, no but – I mean –

Gregg: Ok, so just Nicole?

Fraser: Yeah.

Gregg: So what did you do with Nicole?

Fraser: What?

Gregg: What did you do with Nicole?

Fraser: We shagged – I shagged her, eh? I told you -

Gregg: Aye, but give me details. Any details, come on. What happened? Where did you shag? What position did you shag in? Eh?

Fraser: What?

Gregg: I said what position did you shag her in? If you're so fucking keen to talk about it, talk about it, like. I want to know, eh? Go on, what position? What posi-

Fraser: Uh...doggy –

Gregg: And how long did you last?

Fraser: What?

Gregg: How long did you last?

Beat.

Fraser: An hour -

Gregg: You're talking out your arse mate. You are talking utter shite.

Fraser: I'm not –

Gregg: You are – you fucking are and you know it. I'm tired of this alright? I've got an hour left and I'm knackered. If you keep quiet till I finish, I'll give you another fag at the end, ok? Deal?

Fraser: Aye, fine –

Gregg: Right, so shut it.

They smoke in silence. Gregg eventually exits. Will enters.

Fraser: Alright?

Will: Yeah not bad thanks, you?

Fraser: Aye, not bad, like.

Will lights a cigarette. Pause.

Fraser: So last night, I was shagging this bird, right?

Scene Seventeen

Natalie is an actress in her 20's.

Natalie: One more take? Ok, one more but then that's all. Just because I have to be somewhere at one, and I can't cancel. I did tell Pete – you know, when he asked me - Ok. One more time. Do you

want me to do the introduction again, or should I just go straight into it? Alright, that's fine. I'll do the introduction again. No, that's fine. Just read it cold again? Are you sure? I just think if I acted it – Ok. No, that's fine. Sure. Let me know when you're ready.

Beat.

Natalie: My name is Natalie Stewart, I'm an actress and I'll be reading "Nyree's Story." Nyree, a 22 year old Sociology student was sexually abused by her employer, Majid Asadi, better known as Marco Cucinotta. This is her account.

Beat. Natalie is now reading as Nyree.

Natalie: I didn't know who I could tell, or who would listen; who would believe me. I mean I didn't even know if I wanted to tell anyone, even if they were to listen. But when not telling anyone meant letting him get away with it, like so many men do, I knew I had to, even if that did mean people treating me differently. Talking to me differently. So I'm telling *you*.

Beat.

Natalie: It would be wrong not to tell the whole story, properly. Since my first day at Bella in Vista, Marco had his eyes set on me. He didn't hide it. He flirted with everyone but I always knew it was different with me. It wasn't just harmless flirting. It will have looked that way, probably. To everyone I'm sure it looked like Marco's every day behaviour, but it wasn't. He wanted me. It took him about seven months to act on it. Just as Ruth was leaving the restaurant one day, he turned to me and told me if I ever wanted a bit of fun I knew where to go. I ignored the offer, the first time. And the second time, and the third time.

Beat.

Natalie: The fourth time, I was having an awful day. My ex had just got engaged to someone, and he hadn't told me. I'd heard from an ex of his. Maybe that doesn't justify what I did, but I felt awful about myself, never mind the fact that I had to work that day. At the end of the shift, Marco asked me again. 'Ruth's staying with her mother', he told me. He had the house to himself. And I'm not completely sure why, but I said yes. And I slept with him that night. And once a week or so for the next couple of months.

Beat.

Natalie: I would understand if you judged me now. Sleeping with a married man, thirty years older than me. But I needed someone to want me, or at least I felt like I needed that. And he wanted me. And I liked that, even if I did feel awful, after each time. I guess there was something exciting about it all. Having an affair; an affair with the boss, the older Italian, or Iranian, boss. He was a real man, I'd tell my friends. Not just another boy.

Beat.

Natalie: It all got old quite quickly. It stopped being exciting and became embarrassing. It became humiliating. By the time two months had passed, I hated myself more than I had when we'd started.

Ruth caught on quite quickly. She found the phone; saw the texts. Our messages. 'House is free. Come over tonight?' Or, 'Ruth is away. Come.'

Beat.

Natalie: At that point I'd put an end to whatever it was me and Marco were doing. I'd started seeing Gregg. Not for long, but we'd been on a couple of dates. Gregg was older too, but that's not why I liked him. He wanted me like Marco did, but it was more than that. He cared about me. He probably wouldn't have told anyone, but he did. I could tell.

Beat.

Natalie: I'd still get the texts. Even though Ruth knew, he didn't stop. I'd get these messages just as often. 'You free tonight? Nobody in.' 'Ruth away. You free later?' I'd stopped replying. Maybe I should have given in my notice as soon as it got out, but I needed the money. And Gregg worked there. I was safe with Gregg.

Beat.

Natalie: On the 25th of July I was supposed to start work at 5, but I was called in early. We all were. Matthew Dent was coming, so the restaurant had to be perfect. He didn't speak to me when I came in for work that day. In fact, he barely acknowledged me. And Ruth was giving me dirty looks throughout the shift. I just ignored it, I had to.

Beat.

Natalie: At nine o'clock Matthew Dent arrived. At ten o'clock Marco let all the waitresses go, besides Margarita and I. At eleven o'clock the kitchen finished up, and everyone but Leon went. At about half past, Marco invited the three of us to drink with him and his celebrity friend. Officially, we were working, as Marco wouldn't have let us leave. But we were to drink with them, not just serve them. By then he was talking to me again. Not just talking; every now and then I'd feel his hand on my thigh. I'd push it off discretely, obviously, but it wouldn't be long till it was there again. Each time a little further up. I asked Leon to wait with me, to walk me home but he didn't. At one everyone was drunk, including me. But I was still wary of him, after everything.

Beat.

Natalie: At about half one, Marco announced we'd all be leaving together. I decided to go to the bathroom, before we did, and I got back to see an almost empty restaurant. Marco stood, propped up against the bar, finishing the bottle. The other two were outside, apparently. Waiting. I knew something was wrong then I think, but I hesitated to ask. 'They're waiting outside,' he told me. It sounds stupid now but I believed him then, completely. And I assumed Matt and Marge would be making out in a corner somewhere, waiting to hear us leave before showing their faces. He asked me to check the backdoor was locked. So I did.

Beat.

Natalie: When I turned around I saw he'd followed me into the kitchen. His left hand, pressed against the wall, was the only thing keeping him up really. His right arm, clutching onto the almost

empty bottle of Amarone swung slowly. He smiled at me. I tried to walk past him, but he grabbed my waist and pulled me towards him. 'Why don't you reply to my texts anymore, eh?' I tried to push him off gently. 'Marco, don't.' I kept saying. But he grabbed me again, tighter. 'Where are you going? Darling.' 'She won't find out this time,' 'Haven't you missed me?' I pushed him harder, and he lost his balance for a second before grabbing my arms tighter and throwing me back against the kitchen surface, pressing me against it with his body. Before I could scream his hand was on my neck, his tongue was in my mouth. 'One more time darling. Just one more time.' As soon as he moved his lips from mine, I screamed. His grip tightened around the back of my neck, as he pushed harder against me. 'One more time,' he kept whispering. He started undoing my shirt. I begged him to stop. I begged him, but it was too late. He spun me around, throwing me against the surface again and pushing me against it so I could barely breathe. Before I could scream one last time, his hand was there to stop it. To keep it in. I gave up about then. He pulled my skirt down. He pulled my knickers down and he violated me, one more time

Pause.

Natalie: It can only have lasted a few minutes. I don't know, the details are hazy. I don't remember everything. After he'd finished he stumbled back into the restaurant, sat down with another bottle of wine. I put my clothes back on and went to leave. He didn't say anything. He just sat there, watching me go. I didn't sleep that night.

Pause.

Natalie: I don't know what else to say. That's what happened. I don't want to force an opinion down anyone's throat; I just felt if I didn't share my story, what would stop him doing it again. I'm not the first, and I certainly won't be the last. But if I can stop *Marco*, that's a start.

Beat. Natalie has finished reading as Nyree. She takes a sip of water.

Natalie: How was that? No, don't – I'm sorry I have to rush off. But was that alright? Have you got everything you need? Perfect - no thank *you*.

Scene Eighteen

Otto *is the Italian head in chef in his forties.*

Otto: You are eh not the first person to ask me that. Bella Vista, you want to call it eh Bella Vista, 'beautiful view.' But that is wrong. It is not Bella Vista, beautiful view, it is eh Bella *in* Vista, from an old Italian eh saying. 'Bella in vista dentro è trista.' In English, eh...beautiful view is eh only at the front. Only the skin is eh beautiful. What? 'Fair face, eh foul heart?' Is that how you say? Ok, fair face eh foul heart. That is what it eh means. I eh never knew if he was eh joking - if he was making eh joke about not being Italian or if he make eh mistake - if he want to say Bella Vista, beautiful view. Nobody knows, I eh never ask him. But I don't think he'd eh tell me. I don't think he'd tell eh anyone. A magic – magish – magician, yes, a magician eh never reveals his tricks, or eh his mistakes! But that is what it eh means. 'Bella in Vista, dentro è trista.' Fair face, eh foul heart.

Beat.

Otto: I knew him long time. Twenty years. That is eh long time. Too long, eh maybe. I knew what he eh did. Anybody who knew him like eh I knew him, knew what he did. We knew what he eh wanted. We knew what he eh did. And we said nothing. We never said eh anything. And maybe that was eh wrong, maybe that – maybe that was eh wrong of us. But eh he was the boss. He eh made the menus – he eh...invented them, we just eh made the food again eh every day. Why? For eh money. To stay in kitchen.

Beat.

Otto: ‘Bella in Vista, dentro è trista.’ I eh think this is eh everyone. This is eh all of us. We are all eh more eh beautiful outside than we are in the eh inside. In eh here.

Beat.

Otto: Twenty years. I knew eh what he eh did. Everybody did. In eh every place I work with eh Marco, he was eh married. And in eh every place he saw one, or two eh waitresses, after work. Customers eh never knew, they eh didn’t care. He was eh charming. He was eh gentleman, on the eh outside. On the outside he was eh normal. And us who eh knew the inside, eh pretended it eh was eh normal too. To eh keep our eh jobs

Beat.

Otto: ‘Bella in Vista, dentro è trista.’ We are all eh more eh beautiful outside than we are in the eh inside. Maybe eh Marco was eh more eh bad than eh most of us. But we eh let it eh happen. We eh never said eh anything. Nobody wants to say eh anything. We are eh looking out eh for ourselves. But it was eh always there. Eh, how eh you say? Not eh seen. Not eh found. Unnoticed? Eh yes, eh unnoticed.

Scene Nineteen

Reporter: The trial of Majid Asadi has been indefinitely postponed, due to the prolonged duration of the Iranian manager’s comatose state. As his mental condition has remained constant, at this stage we can only speculate as to when this case will be resolved. Bella In Vista, opening in May, 2008 –

Gregg: Quarter to eleven. Thank fuck. Last fag of the day.

Gregg, Will, Otto and Leon are smoking in silence.

Will: You working tomorrow?

Gregg: Aye, you?

Will: Yeah. Are you, Leon? Are you working tomorrow?

Leon: What?

Gregg: Are you working tomorrow? (*Annunciating*) Are you working tomorrow? Tomorrow.

Leon: Yes, of course.

Beat.

Gregg: *(To Otto)* You?

Otto: Not eh tomorrow, it is eh my day off.

Gregg: What you gonna do, like? On your day off.

Otto: I'm eh coming here, for eh lunch.

Pause.

Will: What you going to order?

Otto: Penne Cesare. If you eh spit on my food -

Gregg: Nah, just don't try whatever Marco orders, eh?

Otto *laughs, puts out his cigarette and exits.*

Gregg: So you alright to stock check tonight Leon? *(Annunciating)* Stock check – check the stock, tonight. Is that ok? Is that ok?

Leon: What?

Gregg: Stock check – are you ok to check what stock we have? Is that ok?

Leon: Check stock?

Gregg: Aye, is that alright, like? I'll do it next week.

Leon: Yes.

Gregg: Sorted.

Leon *puts out his cigarette.*

Gregg: Tell Marco first, eh? He'll know what we need.

Leon *exits.*

Gregg: He doesn't fucking know what I just said, does he? If you're going in, can you ask Marco what we need and tell Leon. You might have to draw pictures, eh? Play a game of fucking charades.

Will: Yeah that's fine.

Gregg: Cheers.

Will *puts his cigarette out, and exits.* **Gregg** *smokes alone.* **Nyree** *enters.*

Nyree: You finished?

Gregg: Aye.

Nyree: Don't leave us with those two.

Gregg: I thought he was gorgeous?

Nyree: *He* is. I was talking about the other one, really.

Gregg: How long do you think he'll keep you on?

Nyree: No more than an hour, hopefully. Still want me to come round after?

Gregg: Aye, if you fancy it, like.

Nyree: Should I bring anything?

Gregg: Nah, we've got a couple of beers left over from last time. I can cook you something, eh?

Nyree: That's ok, I'll eat here.

Gregg: Alright.

Beat.

Gregg: I'm fucking sick of this shite hole.

Nyree: Well it's not long now, is it?

Gregg: Eh?

Nyree: You'll get the call any day now, right? The rigs?

Gregg: Oh, right. Aye, I'll be gone soon, eh? I'll get the call any day now, aye, I will. But – Well until then, I'm stuck here. And it's driving me mental, like. I'm still here. If you weren't, I'd fucking get out now.

Nyree: You wouldn't.

Gregg: I would.

Nyree: Where would you go?

Gregg: I don't fucking know, but not here. I know that. Not here -

Nyree: Another kitchen, that's where you'd go.

Gregg: Aye, probably. And what? what's wrong with that? Eh?

Nyree: It'd be the same.

Beat.

Nyree: It doesn't matter though, does it? Cos I am here, and I'm not leaving.

Gregg: I'll hold you to that, eh?

Beat.

Nyree: I should get back.

Gregg: Hang on, I'll come in with you.

Gregg *puts out his cigarette.*

Gregg: I'd go to Austria.

Nyree: What?

Gregg: If you left, I'd go to Austria.

Nyree: Why?

Gregg: My mate owns a –

Nyree: A restaurant?

Gregg: Aye. Well, more of a bar, but they do food -

Nyree: So another kitchen?

Beat.

Gregg: It'd be different though. It would.

Scene Twenty

Gregg: What? You're wanting an ending, aren't you? A proper ending. I don't blame you, you've got this far – you wanna know what happens to us, eh? To Marco. To Nyree. To me. Well, I hate to disappoint, but there is no ending. *(To an audience member)* He thinks I'm joking. But I'm not. There is no ending, not a proper one anyway. Why? Cos it hasn't ended. Not yet, eh? See, Marco's still around. Still in hospital, aye, in a coma, but he's far from dying, like. His condition's stayed the same apparently, so we're still waiting on the trial. I think we'll be waiting some time.

Beat.

Gregg: Nyree is – Well, Nyree's taking a couple of years out of university. Not seen her much since, eh? She's been campaigning though, working with charities, like, against – Well, against sexual abuse. She's invited me to a couple of her things, but I've – well, I've not been to any yet.

Beat.

Gregg: And me? What about me. I'm just working down the road, for now, part-time at my local, eh? When Bella closed, they offered it me. But it's temporary. *(To an audience member)* She

doesn't believe me, but it is. I'll be gone soon, I'm just waiting on the call. For the rigs. They've not been hiring lately. But they are now, so it'll be gone soon. I will.

Beat.

Gregg: But does it matter what happened to me, like? Does it? Cos I don't think it does. Nah, see I don't think it does. I think what matters is that one in five women in the UK have experienced some sort of sexual abuse. One in five. And I think it matters that on average women makes 14.9% less than us men do for the same fucking jobs. And I think it matters – I think it fucking matters that we all still behave how we think we should behave. We do, eh? We all do. All of you do. Every fucking day. There are rules for being a man, and rules for being a woman. Aye, there's no fucking handbook, you know them already. You've been taught them. You were taught them you've spent your life learning them and now that's what you know as normal. You've been taught them so well, you don't think to question them. To challenge them. A man is strong, a woman is weak, eh? *(Pointing to a male audience member)* He's fucking nodding. Don't nod, *(Pointing to a female audience member)* I reckon she'd pummel you. These rules are passed down from generation to generation but they're not true, eh? They only are when we make them true. But we still follow them. Not as much, aye, but we still do. And we still teach them. That's what matters. In primary schools, boys and girls are being told they are different. In homes, they are being told what men do and what women do. And in the playground, they are carried out – they are performed.

Beat.

Gregg: What I'm doing now means fuck all. What matters is that these rules – these codes are in place right now. And they always will be, unless we stop teaching them. Till then, they'll keep working, like the physics, like us in this fucking kitchen, unnoticed. Ladies and gentleman, thank you for coming. Goodnight.