

Men in White Suits



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ACT 1 SCENE 1

THE PLACE -OUTSIDE DRUMRIGG FARMHOUSE, SOUTH WEST SCOTLAND. THE YEAR-2001. THE SEASON - EARLY MARCH, BEFORE SPRING HAS REALLY TAKEN OFF. THE TIME - MID MORNING.

THE SCENE IS SUCH THAT WE SEE THE OUTSIDE WALL OF THE FARM HOUSE STAGE LEFT, WITH THE KITCHEN DOOR USL. THE CENTRAL STAGE AREA IS THE YARD. A TRACTOR COULD BE SITED STAGE RIGHT FOR EFFECT, OR IF THIS IS NOT FEASIBLE, A "DEAD" TRACTOR TYRE, TWISTED METAL, FENCE STOBS ETC CAN BE LAID AROUND TO GIVE THE EFFECT OF A WORKING FARM AREA - INDICATING THAT THIS IS THE GUTS OF THE AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY, NOT A REPRESENTATION OF THE RURAL "IDYLL". THE BACKDROP CAN SHOW HILLS ROLLING INTO THE DISTANCE, SO THAT WE GAIN THE EFFECT OF NATURE AND INDUSTRY.

STANDING HARD UPON EACH OTHER. FOUR MEN IN FARM OVERALLS ARE GATHERED ROUND A MAN IN A DRAB BROWN SUIT. HE IS A MAN FROM THE MINISTRY. (MAFF) HE'S MID 40'S. THE FARM MEN SURROUNDING HIM ARE DUNCAN (50) TENANT OF DRUMRIGG FARM, EUAN (60) HIS PART TIME COWMAN, RAB (40) SHEPHERD/FARMHAND AND JACKY (20) FARMHAND. THE MAN FROM THE MINISTRY HANDS A LOAD OF PAPERS TO ONE OF THE MEN AND EXITS DSR.

EUAN: Bastard.

DUNCAN: It's no his fault Euan. He's just daein' his job.

EUAN: Some mean job,like.

RAB: T's like BSE all ower again. (turns to the youngest of the company, Jacky, standing by silent and shellshocked.) Y'll no even mind the BSE lad eh?

JACKY BREAKS SILENCE.

JACKY: You kidding me Rab?

DUNCAN PUTS A PROTECTIVE ARM ROUND JACKY'S SHOULDER.

DUNCAN: This boy spent his first six months on the job howking calves oot' of kye all the while kennin' they were aff tae the knackers the lot o' em. He ken's farming Rab, niver you mind.

EUAN: How's that fer youth opportunities hey?

THE MEN STAND AROUND FOR A MOMENT, POINTLESS, DEJECTED. RAB OFFERS ROUND A PACK OF FAGS. ALL TAKE ONE EXCEPT DUNCAN. ALL LIGHT UP. RAB SPEAKS ON THE EXHALE.

RAB: So wha's the score boss?

DUNCAN EXAMINES THE FORM.

DUNCAN: Form D.

EUAN: Bastard.

THEY ALL STAND SILENT, SMOKING FOR A MOMENT LONGER.

RAB: So wha'es fer the chop then?

THERE IS NO SIDE TO HIS COMMENT - THESE MEN ARE UNIFIED IN DESPAIR. IT'S RESIGNATION WE PICK UP IN HIS TONE.

JACKY: Like as it'll no come tae that. No ivery farm gets it eh?

EUAN SHAKES HIS HEAD.

EUAN: That's no what he means, boy. Cows and sheep may hiv a few mair days, or weeks, or mebbe's even a month. (he draws a line across his own

throat) He means, which o' us is fer the chop?

DUNCAN IS MEANWHILE STUDYING THE FORM D NOTICE.

JACKY: 's it true boss?

AT LAST DUNCAN LOOKS UP, DAZED FROM HIS READING, SEEMINGLY UNAWARE OF THE MEN'S CONVERSATION.

DUNCAN: Sorry, what boy?

JACKY: We're out o' a job? How..

EUAN: Last in first oot boy, that's the way o' the world. Nothing personal.

RAB: Aye. Disease is niver personal eh? (there's a note of deep sarcasm in his voice.) Unless yer the sufferin' one.

JACKY: 'm I? Is it..? Boss. 'm I? Ma mum relies on ma wage...

EUAN: Dinnae start greetin' boy, we've a' got mooths tae feed.

DUNCAN STEPS IN BETWEEN THE MEN, RAISING HIS HAND.

DUNCAN: Look. Here's the thing. There's no easy way to say this. Here's a Form D. It's a death warrant a' right, just no a death warrant the day. (he reads, paraphrasing, from the document) We've tae restrict movement in and out as much as we can. We cannae move the beasts in and we cannae move them around. A' we can do is feed them where they stand. That's no a job for four men.

EUAN: Last in, first oot, Jacky boy. Niver personal. Jist the way o' the workin' world.

DUNCAN: I can only afford to keep one o' you on the now. An' that has tae be Rab. He lives upbye the farm and we can keep it contained that way. For the while. Euan, you're too much o' a risk. Think o' yer own flock man. You cannae risk passing it frae here tae there...

EUAN BREAKS IN ON HIS SPEECH

EUAN: Or frae mine's tae your's you mean eh?

DUNCAN SHRUGS.

DUNCAN: Look. You ken and I ken that none o' us has got it the now. But who kens how it travels. And who kens what the men in suits will dae next.

RAB: Sacrificial lambs a' right.

DUNCAN: I'll pay ye aff, fair as I can. And as soon as it's bye your jobs are back on, ye ken that the baith o' ye.

EUAN: If there's any beasts tae tend by then.

DUNCAN: None o' us can see intae that future Euan. We've jist got to keep faith. Now come on inside. The wife'll mak' ye a brew whiles I sort oot yer wages.

EUAN SHAKES HIS HEAD.

EUAN: I'm off the noo. Dinnae want ye tae catch nuthin. Send on ma wages eh?

HE EXITS DOWN STAGE RIGHT. THE MEN WATCH HIM GO. RAB SHAKES HIS HEAD.

RAB: 'Ts a poor business a' the same.

DUNCAN TURNS DSL TOWARDS THE FARM HOUSE DOOR.

DUNCAN: Ma hands're tied Rab. You ken that. Your boy Sam, has he no been working wi' the ministry these last days but?

RAB: Aye. 'ts the same a' ower. Men oot o' work. Men looking fer work. Men findin' work where they can.. one day yer tendin' a beast, the next day yer throwin' its carcass on the pyre. 'f yer lucky enough tae get that job.
(reflecting) Lucky, huh?

JACKY IS STANDING STUNNED. DUNCAN PUTS HIS HAND ON JACKY'S SHOULDER AGAIN AND SHEPHERDS HIM TOWARDS THE DOOR.

DUNCAN: Come on in and get yerself a drink, boy.

JACKY FOLLOWS DUNCAN TOWARDS THE HOUSE. RAB BRINGS UP THE REAR.

RAB: C'mon Jacky boy, you'll get a job on the burnin' nae bother. Strong young lad like you...

THEY EXIT INTO THE HOUSE.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE 2

INSIDE THE FARM KITCHEN. DAY. THE EXIT TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD IS STAGE RIGHT. UPSTAGE SITS THE KITCHEN RANGE, AGA OR SUCHLIKE, AND THE SINK WITH DRAINER. STAGE LEFT IS A LARGE WELSH DRESSER. THE CENTRAL AREA OF THE STAGE IS TAKEN UP WITH A FARM TABLE AND FOUR CHAIRS. IN THIS ENVIRONMENT, PHYLLIS (LATE 40'S BUT LOOKING NEAR TEN YEARS OLDER) IS BUSYING ROUND PREPARING DINNER FOR THE MEN. THIS IS HER PLACE AND SHE KNOWS IT, BUT WHETHER IT IS HER DOMAIN OR PRISON REMAINS UNCERTAIN. MAYBE SHE HAS THE RADIO ON LOW, BUT SHE'S CERTAINLY NOT SINGING, HUMMING - THERE'S A SENSE OF SILENCE, OF ISOLATION IN HER ACTIONS. THE MEN COME IN. THEIR PRESENCE IS UNEXPECTED AND SHE STARTS AS IF SHE'S BEEN CHEATED BY TIME.

PHYLLIS: It's niver dinner a'ready?

SHE LOOKS AT THE CLOCK. IT READS ELEVEN. LOOKS AT THE MEN, GATHERED, SPEECHLESS IN THE DOORWAY.

PHYLLIS: What it is? What's? Duncan? What is it? It's no..

THE MEN WALK INTO THE ROOM, WITHOUT REMOVING THEIR MUDDY BOOTS. DUNCAN WAVES THE NOTICE IN HER FACE AS HE PASSES HER BY AND SLUMPS DOWN AT THE TABLE. "HIS" SEAT IS AT THE HEAD, WHICH IN OUR SET UP IS STAGE LEFT.

DUNCAN: 'Ts a death warrant.

PHYLLIS LOOKS DESPERATELY AT RAB.

PHYLLIS: It's not..

RAB: It's a schedule D, Mrs M. That's a'.

DUNCAN PUTS HIS HEAD IN HIS HANDS.

DUNCAN: So. A delayed death warrant forby it's still the end. (he addresses Phyllis without even looking up) Get the tea on the table eh?

PHYLLIS RALLIES ROUND, GETS THE KETTLE OFF THE AGA AND WARMS THE POT. RAB SITS NEXT TO DUNCAN, FACING THE AUDIENCE. PHYLLIS NOTICES JACKY, STILL STANDING IN THE DOORWAY.

PHYLLIS: Jacky. Sit yerself down, son.

JACKY: I've tae look fer a job. I dinnae want another job. I like this job.

PHYLLIS RINSES OUT THE POT.

PHYLLIS: Come on Jacky. Don't just stand there like a mooncalf. Get the mugs oot then.

HER MATTER OF FACT TONE SPURS JACKY INTO ACTION. HE COLLECTS THE MUGS FROM THE DRAINER, PUTS THEM DOWN ON THE TABLE, MAKING SURE EACH GETS THEIR OWN MUG, A GESTURE WHICH INDICATES A FAMILIAR REPETITION. BY THE TIME HE'S FINISHED, PHYLLIS HAS BROUGHT THE TEAPOT TO THE TABLE, AND GIVES HIM A NUDGE TO GET HIM TO SIT DOWN BESIDE RAB. SHE SITS HERSELF AT THE OPPOSITE END OF THE TABLE TO DUNCAN - STAGE RIGHT. ALL SIT IN SILENCE. DUNCAN LOOKS UP. REACHES FOR THE POT. THEY ALL POUR THEMSELVES A CUP OF TEA, PHYLLIS LAST. THEY ALL STIR MILK AND SUGAR INTO THEIR MUGS - SILENTLY. THEY BEGIN TO DRINK. PHYLLIS LOOKS AT JACKY. SEES HE'S ABOUT TO CRACK. BREAKS THE SILENCE.

PHYLLIS: So what's tae happen next then?

DUNCAN: I'll make up the boys wages. We've tae send Euan's on. The boy can put the envelope in the post on his way home, no?

PHYLLIS: I don't mean that Duncan. I mean, can I go to the shops? I'm due the monthly trip to Tesco's. Do we have to put up a sign? (pause, then slowly, each word deliberately spoken) What happens now? DUNCAN PUSHES THE FORM OVER TO HER. DUNCAN You can read as well as me I s'pose.

RAB AND JACKY ARE AWARE OF THE TENSION. THEY FOCUS ON THEIR TEA.

JACKY: I could get you some messages..

RAB SWILLS DOWN HIS TEA, STANDS UP. TALKS TO DUNCAN, OVER JACKY.

RAB: So that's me. I'll take a bale doon on the tractor, spread the straw. Get started. (he turns to Phyllis.) Have you got some disinfectant and a bucket Mrs M.?

PHYLLIS: Jist Flash. No the kind o' stuff they'll be wanting.

DUNCAN BARKS OUT.

DUNCAN: They'll gie us that. They'll bring it. Stop fussing woman.

RAB LEAVES THE TABLE. EXITS THE DOOR STAGE RIGHT. PHYLLIS LOOKS UP FROM THE FORM. IT'S CLEAR SHE'S USED TO DUNCAN'S TONE AND IT'S CLEAR HER TACTIC IS TO CARRY ON AS NORMAL. HER VOICE IS ITS USUAL MATTER OF FACT TONE.

PHYLLIS: We need to get a sign up. There's paint left from the byre doors eh?

JACKY TRIES TO RELIEVE THE TENSION IN THE ROOM BY BEING HELPFUL.

JACKY: I can dae that. I'm good wi' painting. Signs and that.

DUNCAN LOOKS AT JACKY BUT IT'S AS IF HE'S LOOKING STRAIGHT THROUGH HIM.

DUNCAN: I'll pay you till the end o' the week Jacky.

JACKY MISUNDERSTANDS, SMILES.

JACKY: There's plenty I can do to help you get it a' ready boss.

DUNCAN: I'll pay you till the end o' the week, but you have to leave the day son. When you walk oot here boy, you cannae come back till it's a' ower one way or the other.

JACKY: But the sick calves in the back shed..

DUNCAN: Sorry, boy. It has to be that. Rab an' I can dae it all. You get aff hame. Tell yer ma.

JACKY: Can I no just come out wi' you the now? Finish off but?

DUNCAN SHAKES HIS HEAD.

DUNCAN: Sorry boy. It's best this way. You know, there'll always be a job for you here if we don't get it.

PHYLLIS: And if we do?

DUNCAN: If we get it, we're all fucked woman.

HE GETS UP FROM THE TABLE. JACKY JUMPS UP TO FOLLOW HIM. DUNCAN MOTIONS HIM TO SIT DOWN. HIS VOICE SOFTENS.

DUNCAN: Na. Sit down and finish yer tea, boy. It's no a fire. (turns to Phyllis.) Write the boy a cheque up, eh?

HE EXITS THE DOOR STAGE RIGHT. JACKY AND PHYLLIS SIT LOOKING AT EACH OTHER FOR A LONG TIME. SHE OFFERS HIM ANOTHER CUP OF TEA. HE NODS. TAKES IT. SLOWLY, FAR TOO

SLOWLY STIRS ONE, TWO, THREE SUGARS INTO HIS MUG. HE KEEPS RHYTHMICALLY STIRRING THE SUGAR IN TILL SHE REACHES OVER, TAKES HIS HAND AND REMOVES IT FROM THE CUP. HE LOOKS UP, ASHAMED OF THE CLOSE CONTACT. THERE ARE TEARS IN HIS EYES. HE STRUGGLES TO SPEAK.

JACKY: I cannae go back to ma ma an' tell her this noo. She's just oot the hospital.

PHYLLIS: Drink your tea Jacky.

THEY SIT DRINKING TEA TOGETHER.

PHYLLIS: When I first came to this farm I was just about your age you know. Full o' hopes. Just married. Ma father was a gamekeeper, so I thought I knew enough about farming. About how to be a farmers wife. My mum died when I was eleven. Nineteen sixty seven. During the last foot and mouth. An' I grew up that year and took care o' ma dad and ma wee sister an brother and cooked and cleaned and did a' the things ma ma did before me. So I wis sure I kenned what it was tae be a farmers wife. And Duncan was a farmers son, and grandson and greatgrandson, so he surely knew what it was tae be a farmer. Knew nothing else. Knows nothing else the day. And within the year oor own son, Kevin wis born here. Then Martin after him. Then Shona. An we wis sure they would be farming here long after we wis pushing up the daisies. And I remember when Kevin wis eleven and he came to his dad and he said: "I'm no gonna farm dad. It's no worth it." It broke his dad's heart so it did. But what could he say? And Kevin left school and went on the trucks and got killed in a road crash but four months later and we stood at his funeral and his dad just said, as he threw the earth in on his firstborn son's coffin "wis it no worth it boy?"

THERE IS AN AWKARD PAUSE. WE SENSE THAT PHYLLIS IS BACK IN THE PAST.

JACKY: And what about the others?

PHYLLIS: Martin always tried to please his dad. He said he'd go into farming. He even went to college. Came home, an' tried to teach the old dog

some new tricks. Then BSE. He's off to New Zealand now. Been there five years. We get a card at Christmas but he's got his own life, his own family now and a flock o' thousands and thousands. He's tried tae get his dad tae gang o'er there, but Duncan sees it as givin' in. What's left tae give in I don't know, but that's how he sees it.

JACKY: And your daughter?

PHYLLIS: Shona. Ah Shona. She left home when Kevin died. Just sixteen. But always a fierce mind of her own. Most like her dad of them all. She came home when she was fourteen and said she was a vegetarian. Just to wind him up ken. He couldn't see the joke. A vegetarian farmer's daughter. (pause) She went down to London at sixteen. Works in a bank. So they're all gone one way and another. That's life Jacky. Things go on, things change, they get better and they get worse. And for farmers you can't tell how much worse they can get before they get better, because we don't have any control over anything we do. The weather, the CAP, the government, whoever. They used to say farmers were tied tae the land, but we're tied tae whoever has the last word on us.

JACKY: So what do we do?

PHYLLIS: All we can do is go on. Go on tending beasts, growing meat for people who're convinced that vegetables are healthier. Go on into debt upon debt upon debt while's those in the cities bang on about the unfair subsidies we get. Take the subsidies because they're the only way we can survive, but it's just surviving then, not farming, because we have to work the way THEY say and THEY don't know what they're talking about half the time. They don't get their boots dirty talking to the likes o' us. Only the big farmers, the men wi' the Range Rovers and bank balances tae match. No us. No the tenants. No the workers. So you go home to your ma Jacky an' you tell her you'll dae whatever you need to dae to support her. And you dae that.

JACKY: I just want to work on the farm. Here. It's all I've ever wanted. To work with the animals. To drive a tractor. You get let alone when you're on the tractor.

PHYLLIS: There's precious few like you left, son. If there's any beasts left after this, because this will end Jacky, it all ends. And then it all goes on again. Same but different. So, after all this madness ends, you come back here, and if we're still here, you just carry on like before.

JACKY: And if you're not?

PHYLLIS: If we're not, you find somewhere else, some other farmer whose own son said "it's not worth it" and you go into that farm kitchen and you tell them it's worth it for you. And you'll never be without a job son. You'll never make your ma rich, but you'll make her proud a' right.

JACKY: And what about you?

PHYLLIS: What about me?

JACKY: If.. if the farm... what if..?

PHYLLIS: If we get the foot and mouth and we lose the animals, we'll face that like we've faced everything else. I'm not saying we'll face it the gither, cause that's not the way we face things Duncan and me. He'll dae it his way, and I'll dae it mine, and somewhere in the middle it'll pass. And he'll gang on, and I'll gang on. And maybe it'll be the best thing that can happen. Maybe ma dad was right an' I wasn't cut out to be a farmers wife. Life's a long game Jacky and when you're your age you think you can see right out into the future, far as you can see into the night sky. And you're sure you will still be there ,the same you, looking at it all forever. But somewhere, somehow while you're standing there looking at the stars you realise that they're aye the same but you're not any more. When you start looking back in your life you realise you never saw as far into the future as you thought you could, and then you realise that at forty you can only see half as far in the future as you could at twenty, maybe that's because you spend so much time looking back wondering how you could have done it differently. Whatever way you look though son, you can't see it all. Now I'm not sure what I'm looking at or what I'm looking for any more. But I'm still looking. Still looking up at those stars and wondering.

SHE STANDS UP. CROSSES TO THE DRESSER TAKES OUT A CHEQUE BOOK AND WRITES JACKY A CHEQUE. AS SHE GIVES IT TO HIM THEIR HANDS TOUCH FOR A MOMENT AGAIN. HE LOOKS IN HER EYES.

JACKY: What can I do for you Mrs M? I could get you your messages? I can bring them up to the sign. I can..

PHYLLIS: You can do two things for me Jacky.

JACKY: Anything. Just ask me. As many as you like.

PHYLLIS: You can go home, and kiss your ma and tell her you love her.
(pause)

JACKY: . And the other thing?

PHYLLIS: You can call me Phyllis.

JACKY STANDS UP.

JACKY: I cannae.. it doesn't sound right..

HE STANDS IN FRONT OF HER. SHE IS BETWEEN HIM AND THE DOOR. PHYLLIS How long have we known each other Jacky? HE DOESN'T REPLY.

PHYLLIS: How long have you been coming in here and drinking my tea and eating your dinner and listening to us batter on? More as three year now? Do you not think you can call me Phyllis after all that time? I've known you since before you had a driving licence an' you had to drive the tractor wi' L plates. I've known you since before you had a proper girlfriend. And when you got sheep dip in your eye, I held your head ower the sink and tipped the water in it till you squirmed. And when I've had to sew up the gashes on your fingers from the metal spikes and the holes in your trousers from the barbed wire, you can't call me Phyllis even then?

SHE TAKES HIM IN HER ARMS AND EMBRACES HIM. THEY STAY THERE FOR A LONG TIME. SHE LETS HIM GO.

PHYLLIS: Bye Jacky. After the madness eh?

WE SEE THAT JACKY IS CRYING. HE PUTS UP HIS HAND TO WIPE AWAY A TEAR. SHE STOPS HIM.

PHYLLIS: There'll be mair tears as your's spilt afore this is played out Jacky. Never, never be ashamed to cry. Not in front of your mother and not in front of your friends.

SHE KISSES HIM ON THE FOREHEAD.

PHYLLIS: You'll get work Jacky. And you'll be back here before you know it. Off wi' you now son.

JACKY TURNS TO LEAVE.

JACKY: Bye. (pause. He turns slowly, deliberately to face Phyllis before he leaves.) Phyllis. (pause) And thank you.

PHYLLIS: There's nothing to thank Jacky. You get on home to your ma. And you mind and cash that cheque fast as you can!

THEY EXCHANGE A SMILE AND HE EXITS DSR. PHYLLIS PICKS UP THE TEAPOT AND THE MUG AND TAKES THEM TO THE SINK. AS SHE IS PUTTING THEM DOWN SHE DROPS ONE. IT IS JACKY'S MUG. SHE GETS ON HER KNEES TO PICK UP THE PIECES AND WE CAN SEE THAT SHE IS CRYING.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE 3

OUTSIDE THE FARM. IT IS EVENING. SOME DAYS LATER.
DUNCAN STANDS EXHAUSTED AND PHYLLIS EMERGES FROM
THE HOUSE.

PHYLLIS: You have to eat, Duncan.

DUNCAN: I've still beasts tae see tae.

PHYLLIS: You're on your knees. It's too much for you and Rab. Get the
boy back.

DUNCAN: D'you not think I would have that boy back in a minute if I
could. D'you have no idea how serious this is Phyllis?

HE TURNS AWAY FROM HER, SO MISSES HER NODDING HER
HEAD. SHE SPEAKS WITH A QUIET, CONTROLLED VOICE.

PHYLLIS: Aye. Do you?

HE TURNS BACK TO HER.

DUNCAN: They're looking for an excuse. Any excuse. People coming in,
people going out. Tractors. Cars. Postmen. Whatever it can be. Anything so
as they can say we're at high risk of infection. Then it'll be a form B, a form
A - and curtains. My life's work goes up in smoke. My work. My dad's
work. Generations.

PHYLLIS: You think I don't know all this?

DUNCAN: Whatever you know, you don't know how I feel. They men. In
suits. They've got my balls in their hands and there's nothing I can do about
it. They tell me my flocks in danger of being wiped out by some deadly
virus no one can see and then they tell me to dip my boots and run my
tractor tyres ower a bit o' straw. What good's that gonna dae? The fuckin'
things windborn so what good's that gonna dae? It does them good cause

sooner or later they'll come ower here and say it's ma fault we've got it. Ma fault for not disinfecting. For not taking the right precautions. Whatever I do, soon as they please they'll find a reason and they'll be in here, and they'll wipe me oot. They'll finish us. But I'm no gonna make it easy for them.

PHYLLIS: (under her breath.) You never make it easy for any of us Duncan, so why make them the exception. (to him) But you can come and have your tea. The cows can wait a half hour surely.

DUNCAN: The cows can wait. The sheep can wait. We can all wait. That's all we can do. There's no point to doing anything, and there's no point to the waiting. Me and Rab's running our arses off all day checking on beasts and feeding beasts and tending beasts that might all just as like be dead the next day. And we'll be the one's putting the guns to their heads like as not. Why stop there eh? They might as well shoot us with the beasts. We're all that fucking useless.

PHYLLIS: And what about, how about, have you ever for a moment in your self-righteous self-pity, imagined what if we don't get it? What if we stay clear, and the animals stay alive? What if it all just goes on, eh? What then?

DUNCAN: D'you like your meat fast burn or slow roast? It'll all come to the same in the end. We've no been a viable concern for years Phyllis. D'you not think that when the men in the suits come ower here, the first in line will be the man frae the bank. Stuck wi' twae hunner cows and a thousand sheep tae be fed an' no markets an' no bugger able tae buy them even if they want tae? How long have we got then eh?

IN THE BACKGROUND THE SUN IS SETTING. DUNCAN BREAKS FROM HIS INVECTIVE TO POINT IT OUT.

DUNCAN: See that? See that sun. A beautiful sun. I used tae think. A privilege to be working out in the field and see that rise and see that set. Red sky at night, red sun rising. The colours you get, blue and green and pink and purple. My sky. My land. My sun. Now it's all blood red. All sold tae the butcher. All of it. Blood everywhere. On all of our hands. The whole

countryside's like a badly run abattoir. (he sniffs the air) And the smell. Can you no smell it yet Phyllis? Is it ten miles away yet? Too far for the acrid smoke to hit your lungs. To seep into them, making you sick to your stomach. Geordie Patterson wis on the phone the day. His farms gone down. He's only ten miles away. Ten miles the day. Five miles tomorrow. Will I be wanting my dinner when we're sitting looking out at all our cows shot dead in the byre and sheep in the field hereby and we're shut in wi' the stench and the rotting bodies. Only the rat's'll be wanting their dinner that day.

PHYLLIS: But that day's not here yet, Duncan. You have to go on till that day comes. We both have to go on. It's life.

DUNCAN: Some fucking life.

PHYLLIS: We chose it.

DUNCAN: We never chose this. Nothing close to it.

HE TURNS TO HER IN DESPERATION.

DUNCAN: Where the fuck did it all go? Our life. Our idea of life? What happened to it? Are we stupid? Were we reckless? Did we waste it? Is it our fault?

PHYLLIS: This is what we've got Duncan. This is it. This is our life, like it or not. We keep on going till we can't go on anymore and then if we have to, we keep on going a bit more.

DUNCAN: I tell you one thing woman. And they offer me money to kill my cows and my sheep, I'm taking that money and I'm getting out. Right out. Of here. Of farming. Of the whole fucking lot.

HE TURNS AND WALKS TOWARDS THE HOUSE. BOTH SPEAK THE NEXT LINE AT THE SAME TIME.

PHYLLIS: You don't mean that.

DUNCAN: Now I'm ready for my dinner.

EXEUNT. BLACKOUT.

SCENE 4

INSIDE A PUB. THE BAR IS UPSTAGE RIGHT. TWO TABLES ARE SET UP CLOSE TO EACH OTHER CENTRE STAGE. EACH HAS TWO CHAIRS. JACKY SITS AT ONE OF THEM, NURSING HIS PINT. HE'S THE ONLY PERSON IN THE PUB - APART FROM THE SHADOWY FIGURE OF THE BARMAN, LURKING INCONSEQUENTIALLY BEHIND THE BAR. JACKY SIPS ON HIS PINT. THE DOOR OPENS AND THREE YOUNG PEOPLE ENTER FROM STAGE RIGHT. THEY ARE TALKING, WE CAN'T MAKE OUT WHAT THEY SAY, IT'S JUST A BUZZ. JACKY DOESN'T EVEN LOOK UP. ONE OF THE YOUNG MEN GOES UP TO THE BAR. FROM THERE HE TURNS ROUND AND CALLS OUT TO THE OTHER TWO (A BOY AND A GIRL) HIS TONE REVEALS HIM AS AN URBAN DWELLER.

YOUNG MAN 1: What'll you have - they've not got Belhaven.

YOUNG MAN 2: Then I'll have a pint of eighty shilling. GIRL Malibu and coke.

YOUNG MAN 2 AND GIRL TURN TO JACKY, STILL SITTING LOST IN HIS OWN THOUGHTS.

YOUNG MAN 2 POINTS TO THE SPARE CHAIR BESIDE JACKY.

YOUNG MAN 2: Is anyone sitting here?

JACKY LOOKS UP, BEWILDERED FOR A MOMENT.

YOUNG MAN 2: I said, is anyone sitting here?

THE GIRL SMILES.

GIRL: Is this seat taken?

JACKY WAVES AT THEM TO TAKE THE CHAIR.

JACKY: Na.. na.. take it. Whatever you want.

YOUNG MAN 2 AND GIRL EXCHANGE A GLANCE AND TAKE THE CHAIR. THEY SET IT UP BESIDE THEIR OWN TABLE, IT'S KIND OF CROWDED AND WHEN YOUNG MAN 1 COMES AND PLONKS THEIR DRINKS BACK DOWN ON THE TABLE, THEY ARE CERTAINLY ENCROACHING UPON JACKY'S SPACE. THEY SEEM IGNORANT OF THIS FACT HOWEVER AND THEIR CONVERSATION SHOWS NO INDICATION THAT THEY ARE AWARE HE CAN OVERHEAR.

YOUNG MAN 1: At least the beer's cheaper down here.

YOUNG MAN 2: Not if you take into account the petrol here and back.

YOUNG MAN 1 BRUSHES DOWN HIS TROUSERS, NOTICES SOME MUD ON THE BOTTOM OF HIS JEANS.

YOUNG MAN 1: The carpark is just pure mud.

GIRL: This is the country after all.

YOUNG MAN 2: (mocking her tone) This is the country after all. (pause) Well it's no wonder everyone left for the towns then is it?

YOUNG MAN 1 MAKES A SURREPTITIOUS POINT TOWARDS JACKY AND GIGGLES.

YOUNG MAN 1: The peasantry is alive and well it seems.

THE OTHERS TRY TO SHUSH HIM.

YOUNG MAN 1 IS HAVING NONE OF IT. HE LEANS OVER, WHICH IS NOT FAR, TO JACKY.

YOUNG MAN 1: Do you live here?

FOR A MOMENT IT LOOKS LIKE JACKY ISN'T GOING TO ANSWER.

JACKY: 'f you can call it living. Yeah.

HE DRAINS HIS PINT, GETS UP AS IF TO LEAVE.

YOUNG MAN 1: Oh, we didn't mean to drive you out. Please. Can I get you another drink?

JACKY LOOKS AT HIM. TAKES A MOMENT TO DECIDE. THEN SITS DOWN AGAIN. HE'S NOTHING TO LOSE AFTER ALL.

JACKY: 'f you like. Pint.

YOUNG MAN 2 IS DESPATCHED TO THE BAR TO GET JACKY'S PINT. THE OTHERS TURN THEIR CHAIRS ROUND TO FACE JACKY. WE GET THE SENSE THAT HE IS THE EVENING'S "SPORT".

GIRL: So. Do you work round here?

BEFORE JACKY CAN ANSWER, YOUNG MAN 1 INTERJECTS AND WE SENSE A SMIRK TO HIS COMMENT

YOUNG MAN 1: On the land?

JACKY: I've just lost ma job.

YOUNG MAN 1: Oh. I'm terribly sorry. Redundancy. A terrible thing. My cousin Pauline was made redundant once. And the funny thing was, she worked for a company who found people jobs. Ironic huh?

JACKY: I've no been made redundant. Just paid off. Foot and mouth.

YOUNG MAN 2 HAS REJOINED THE GROUP. YOUNG MAN 1 FILLS HIM IN.

YOUNG MAN 1: He's lost his job because of the foot and mouth.

GIRL: Did you work on a farm?

JACKY: Yes.

GIRL: Isn't it a terribly hard job?

JACKY SHRUGS.

YOUNG MAN 1: What did you do on the farm?

YOUNG MAN 2: Don't be ignorant, what do you think they do on the farm. Drive tractors. Did you drive a big tractor?

JACKY: Aye. And tend the beasts.

THE GIRL SHIVERS.

GIRL: That is hard work. And... and.. you can't, I mean, we can't.. catch this foot and mouth?

YOUNG MAN 1 MOVES CLOSE TO HER, AS IF TO KISS AND SAYS IN A LOW, SEDUCTIVE VOICE.

YOUNG MAN 1: Only from close intimate contact.

JACKY: No. People can't catch it. (pause) They can transmit it though. (he sips on his pint.) Thanks for the drink.

THE TOWNIES ARE NOT QUITE SURE HOW TO RESPOND TO THE "TRANSMIT" IT LINE. SHOULD THEY MOVE AWAY? IS IT TOO LATE? THERE IS AN AWKWARD MOMENT.

GIR: It must be wretched for you all.

JACKY SHRUGS.

JACKY: I lived through BSE, I'll live through this. It's the animals I feel sorry for. Thousands of healthy animals all being slaughtered for no good reason.

JUST AS IT SEEMS JACKY MIGHT BE ABOUT TO GET ON A SOAP BOX, YOUNG MAN 2 STOPS HIM IN HIS TRACKS.

YOUNG MAN 2: But it's not exactly for no good reason is it? I mean. We have to protect the food chain.

YOUNG MAN 1: And anyway, there's far too many animals on the land. The agricultural industry's a mess, oversubsidising second rate product when we can import better meat at a lower price, and people don't want to eat beef now anyway do they? It's simple supply and demand. If people don't want it, why grow it?

JACKY:.. We don't raise second rate meat. Our farms got pedigree animals going back generations. Our bulls win prizes all over Scotland..

YOUNG MAN 1: Yes. But if no one wants to eat them, then..

JACKY: Where do you folks come from?

YOUNG MAN 1: Milngavie. (proudly)

JACKY: And when were you last on a farm?

SILENCE FOR A MOMENT.

JACKY: I'll bet you've never been on a farm since the school trip in primary four? If then? So what do you know about farms and farming?

YOUNG MAN 1: I don't mean to cause offence, but we do read the papers you know. We have received an education.

YOUNG MAN 2: It's typical of you country people. You want it all ways. You claim that agriculture's an industry, demand the kind of treatment that not even the print workers got and then you tell us we don't understand your way of life. Well I understand it very well.

GIRL: He's an industry analyst.

JACKY: Farming's no an industry to me, pal. It's ma life.

YOUNG MAN 2: And.. look, I can see you are getting somewhat uncomfortable here, so let me reassure you, we are just trying to engage in a

full and frank discussion of the facts, and of course we welcome your knowledge and personal experience, but please. That's just an example of what I said. You people can't decide which century you are in.

JACKY: I know bloody well which century I'm in. I know the day of the week and the name of the prime minister, and the name of the agricultural minister. Do you ken the name of the leader o' the farmers union?

YOUNG MAN 1: Calm down. Calm down. We're just having a drink here.

GIRL: Is it Jim Wallace?

YOUNG MAN 2: No you clown, he's the leader of the opposition for the Scottish Parliament.

GIRL Oh. YOUNG MAN 1: Do you know the name of the chairman of the CBI?

JACKY: Dae I need tae?

YOUNG MAN 2: You see. Ignorance is all right for you but..

JACKY: I'm not coming up to Milgavie telling you folk how to run your businesses. Telling you that you can or can't have a job. That you can or can't make or sell or buy whatever. I'm leaving you alone. But you come down here telling me that if you don't fancy a Sunday roast I should just stop raising cows. And what happens when the fashion changes and you decide you do want beef for your dinners? You cannae just magic up cows from nowhere you ken.

GIRL: I don't think they're trying to tell you what to do..

YOUNG MAN 2: We're just exercising our right to have an opinion.

YOUNG MAN 1: We're down here trying to see for ourselves. To be informed.

JACKY: See what? Be informed about what? You want to see the cows being burned? Smell the smells? So you can go home and tell everyone how

right it is, how dirty and useless the countryside is, and pat each other on the back while you eat your dinosaur shaped mock chicken pieces. Or do you prefer a Big Mac with cheese? How'd you get that without cows?

GIRL: They import it all from America. It's amazing. All the patties and everything. All ready made so that every Macdonalds, everywhere in the world is exactly the same quality.

JACKY LAUGHS.

JACKY: And what quality is that? Shite? You'll all happily eat burger and chips from cattle that have been treated with steroids and hormones and god knows what all, travelled half way across the world and sitting in freezers for ever, and you'd rather eat that than prime Scotch beef, raised within ten miles of your plate?

YOUNG MAN 1: Infected meat's infected meat. Doesn't matter whether it's from America or Argentina or Scotland. And by the way, I wouldn't be seen dead in a Macdonalds.

YOUNG MAN 2: I don't think this discussion is leading anywhere frankly. Perhaps we should just agree to disagree.

JACKY: Aye. That's fine for you. You can disagree with me and get back in your fancy car, go back to your fancy job and your fancy house and watch it all on the news and tell your friends you went to the country but it was dirty and smelly and crap and there wasn't anything to do, so you didn't bother staying.

YOUNG MAN 1: Well you're hardly an advocate for the joys of the countryside. I thought you people wanted tourism?

JACKY. It's no my job to tell you the joys or otherwise. Tourists are nothing to me as long as they don't walk in my fields and leave the gates open. My jobs to raise meat to put on your fancy plate so that you can go to fancy restaurants and complain about the service. But I tell you something. 'f you're in a restaurant in Milngavie or Madrid or Manchester and you're

eating a crap piece of beef, or lamb, it'll not be one of mine. 'f you eat one o' my beasts and it tastes like crap, you blame the fancy cook, not the farmer.

THE TOWNIES DON'T REALLY KNOW HOW TO GO ON FROM HERE. THEY FINISH THEIR DRINKS.

YOUNG MAN 2: Well, I think we should probably move on. It's been (pause) interesting talking to you.. and..

GIRL: Nice meeting you..

AS SHE STANDS UP. STILL NOT CONVINCED ABOUT THE DISTANCE SHE SHOULD KEEP FROM JACKY. THEY ARE ALL ABOUT TO LEAVE WHEN YOUNG MAN 1 DECIDES HE'S NOT GOING TO LEAVE IT AT THIS.

YOUNG MAN: 1 I'm sorry, but you know, we came here with the best of intentions, we buy you a drink and we talk to you.. but you have to realise that this kind of hostility is exactly why we people in the cities find it hard to have sympathy with your situation.

JACKY: We don't need your sympathy and we don't need your charity and we don't need your stupid, ignorant questions and comments. Why don't you just fuck off back to la la land and leave us to get on with it.

YOUNG MAN 1 APPEALS TO THE OTHERS.

YOUNG MAN 1: See. I told you. There's no point trying. Ignorant peasants all of them.

JACKY STANDS UP, PICKING UP HIS GLASS AND THEY LEAVE QUICKLY, FINDING HIS MOVEMENT TOO THREATENING. JACKY LOOKS AT THE DOOR AS IT SLAMS SHUT. HE PICKS UP THE OTHER GLASSES AND CROSSES UPSTAGE TO WHERE THE BARMAN STILL LURKS IN THE SHADOWS. BARMAN Nice one Jacky. Leave me with an empty bar why don't you. JACKY GIVES HIM A DIRTY LOOK.

JACKY: And you can sod off an' all.

EXIT. BLACKOUT.

SCENE 5

THE KITCHEN. SOME DAYS LATER. PHYLLIS IS ALONE, SITTING AT THE KITCHEN TABLE, WRITING. AT FIRST WE IMAGINE SHE MAY BE WRITING A SHOPPING LIST, BUT THEN AS SHE WRITES WE "HEAR" HER THOUGHTS, DELIVERED BY RECORDING MEDIA FROM SOMEWHERE ABOVE HER HEAD, LIKE A CARTOON "THOUGHT-BUBBLE"

PHYLLIS: (recorded) My dearest Duncan. (pause) Dear Duncan.

SHE LOOKS UP TOWARDS THE "THOUGHT BUBBLE" SOUND, AS IF EXTERNALISING HER THOUGHTS - ARGUING WITH HERSELF.

PHYLLIS: Can't write Dear Duncan when you're about to..

SHE TURNS BACK TO THE PAPER AND PEN. PAUSES FOR A MOMENT THEN WRITES.

PHYLLIS: (recorded) Duncan. (pause while she considers if this will do. It will.) It's hard to write this after nearly twenty five years, but I can't go on. We can't go on. Not like this.

SHE LOOKS UP, STARING DIRECTLY TOWARDS THE AUDIENCE, BUT IN EFFECT RIGHT THROUGH THEM.

PHYLLIS: (recorded) I know you'll look for something to blame..

SHE BEGINS TO WRITE AGAIN. LOOKS UP AT THE THOUGHT BUBBLE.

PHYLLIS: Something? Someone?

BEGINS TO WRITE AGAIN.

PHYLLIS: (recorded) Something or someone to blame. But don't. There's no point. It's not BSE. It's not foot and mouth. It's not Kevin or Martin or

Shona. It's not me, and it's not really you.

LOOKS UP AGAIN.

PHYLLIS: It's all of us.

WRITES AGAIN.

PHYLLIS: (recorded - speaking slowly as if spelling it out) It's all of us. It's everything. It isn't worth it any more, really is it?

SHE LOOKS IN HORROR AT WHAT SHE'S WRITTEN, RE-READING IT IN HER HEAD, AS SHE DOES SO, WE HEAR IT AGAIN, RECORDED.

PHYLLIS: (recorded) It isn't worth it any more.

BOY'S VOICE: (recorded) It's no worth it, dad.

SHE SCRIBBLES THAT BIT OUT.

PHYLLIS: (recorded) There's no point prolonging the agony is there? I should go, and you can make what plans you like. I know you'll never leave farming with me here, and as long as I'm here I'm never going to force you to make that decision. But the decisions been made for us really hasn't it Duncan?

SHE SITS FOR A MOMENT, WONDERING HOW TO SIGN OFF.

PHYLLIS: (recorded) I'm sorry we couldn't talk about this, but then, we've never been good about talking really have we, not about things that matter. Lately, not about anything.

SHE PAUSES AGAIN. IT'S ALL GETTING TOO PAINFUL. TURNS BACK TO WRITING A QUICK END.

PHYLLIS: (recorded) I hope this helps you to make your decision Duncan and I'm sorry not to be there to help you through it, I'm not abandoning you, but I feel I can only make things worse. Phyllis.

SHE GIVES THE WHOLE LETTER THE BRIEFEST OF SCANS, THEN FOLDS IT UP, PUTS IT IN AN ENVELOPE AND SITS LOOKING AT IT FOR A MOMENT. SLOWLY, METICULOUSLY SHE WRITES DUNCAN ON THE ENVELOPE THEN PUTS THE PEN DOWN AS IF IT HAS BURNT HER. SHE STANDS UP STILL HOLDING THE LETTER. SHE CROSSES TO THE DRESSER AND PLACES IT ON THE SHELF, SECURING IT BEHIND A PLATE. SHE STANDS BACK FOR A MOMENT LOOKING AT IT. THEN TURNS AWAY FROM IT. SHE LOOKS ROUND THE KITCHEN AND THEN IS ABOUT TO LEAVE BY THE USL DOOR TO THE INSIDE OF THE HOUSE WHEN THE DOOR TO THE OUTSIDE (STAGE RIGHT) SLAMS AND DUNCAN COMES IN WAVING A BIT OF PAPER. HE IS WILD.

DUNCAN: That's it. That's the fucking end of it. Twenty four years of work up in smoke.

HE THROWS THE PIECE OF PAPER DOWN ON THE TABLE. PHYLLIS IS TRANSFIXED TO THE SPOT. DUNCAN WAVES AT THE LETTER.

DUNCAN: Go on. Read it. Read how our lives end.

SHE DOESN'T MOVE. HE PICKS UP THE PAPER, THRUSTS IT INTO HER HANDS.

DUNCAN: Taken away by the men in white suits. Read it.

PHYLLIS: Schedule A? When..?

DUNCAN: The vet's just gone. I'm surprised you niver heard his car take off. Nought to sixty in less time that it takes to say "you're fucked".

PHYLLIS: I didn't..

DUNCAN: We've had the ministry and the vet crawling o'er here all morning and you've niver even noticed? (pause) Ah. Perhaps they niver came in for their cup of tea eh?

SHE SHAKES HER HEAD. HE HAS CROSSED THE STAGE AND IS STANDING BETWEEN PHYLLIS AND THE DRESSER. HE SNATCHES THE FORM A FROM HER.

DUNCAN: And this is how they tell us. A letter. A stinking letter. (he mocks the voice of an official) Terribly sorry to inform you Mr Maxwell that there is a confirmed case of foot and mouth at a contiguous farm and so your sheep and cattle will be burnt fucking mince by dinner.

PHYLLIS LOOKS AT THE LETTER STANDING BY THE DRESSER, WILLING HIM NOT TO NOTICE IT.

PHYLLIS: Sit down Duncan. Calm yourself.

DUNCAN: Calm myself! Fucking calm myself. What are you on? Hey? What fucking planet are you on woman. This is it. Curtains. (pause) Ah. Maybe you're glad eh? Had enough of it all anyway? Huh? Think we should just take the money and run? Well let me tell you, once the banks paid off and the feed merchants and the vets bills and... there won't be any fucking lottery prize winning sum for us. No holidays in the fucking Bahamas for us. We're right royally screwed. Not enough to restock, not enough to walk away. No livestock, no farm, no house, no fucking nothing.

PHYLLIS: When are they coming?

HE LAUGHS, A HOLLOW LAUGH.

DUNCAN: Ah. That is the one thing they can't tell us. When. Could be tomorrow, could be next week. As soon as they can "mobilise resources". We are a "priority case". First fucking time ever.

PHYLLIS: Shall we go down the pub? Have a drink?

DUNCAN: Are you mad, woman?

PHYLLIS: Well. If we know that there's nothing we can do..

DUNCAN: Do you not know what a Form A means? It means there's a fucking soldier posted at the bottom of the drive and we're going nowhere.

You and me. Nowhere. Not till they say.

HE SLUMPS DOWN AT THE TABLE.

DUNCAN: Just you and me. Here. Alone together at last eh? No kids, no farm boys, nobody to get in the way. Stick the kettle on eh? What shall we talk about?

PHYLLIS LOOKS UNEASILY AT THE DRESSER AGAIN THEN CROSSES TO TAKE THE KETTLE FROM THE AGA. PICKS UP A COUPLE OF MUGS. DUNCAN LEAPS UP FROM THE TABLE, CROSSES TO THE DRESSER. THERE'S A MOMENT OF UNBEARABLE TENSION AS WE THINK HE'S GOING TO SEE THE LETTER, BUT INSTEAD HE PICKS UP A COUPLE OF CHINA CUPS. HE TURNS WITH THEM TO PHYLLIS.

DUNCAN: It's a special occasion eh? How about the best China?

HE FLINGS THE CUPS AND SAUCERS ACROSS THE ROOM. STORMS OUT. PHYLLIS'S WORDS AFTER HIM ARE LOST IN THE DEPARTURE.

PHYLLIS: They were a wedding present from my dad.

SHE STOOPS TO PICK UP THE PIECES. PUTS THEM IN THE BIN. THEN SHE REMEMBERS THE LETTER. SHE CROSSES TO THE DRESSER. PICKS IT UP. LOOKS AT IT LONG AND HARD. RIPS IT CLEANLY IN HALF, ONCE, AND THROWS IT IN THE BIN AFTER THE CHINA. SHE SITS DOWN AT THE TABLE AGAIN, BURIES HER HEAD IN HER HANDS AND SOBS.

BLACKOUT.

ACT 2 SCENE 1

THE KITCHEN. SOME DAYS LATER. PHYLLIS IS SITTING AT THE TABLE, HOPELESS AND HELPLESS. AFTER A BRIEF MOMENT WE HEAR SHOT AFTER SHOT IN THE BACKGROUND. THE KILLING HAS STARTED. AFTER WHAT SEEMS FAR TOO LONG, MAYBE FIFTEEN OR TWENTY SHOTS IN A ROW, THERE IS A BREAK IN THE SOUND - LIGHTS DIM MAYBE IN THE HALF LIGHT WE SEE PROJECTED ON THE BACKSCREEN IMAGES OF CATTLE BEING THROWN ONTO THE BURNING PYRE. THE PALLS OF BLACK SMOKE. DEATH 2001 STYLE. LIGHTS GO UP AGAIN AND THE SILENCE CONTINUES - IT IS BROKEN BY A LOUD KNOCK ON THE DOOR (THE WHOLE EFFECT OF THIS SHOULD WORK ON THE AUDIENCE SO THAT THEY BECOME INURED TO THE GUNSHOTS BUT JUMP AT THE DOOR KNOCK) PHYLLIS STARTS AT THE KNOCK. PHYLLIS Come in. THE DOOR OPENS SLOWLY AND ENTER FIVE FIGURES - MEN IN WHITE SUITS (THE HEAD TO FOOT OVERALLS USED IN THE CULLING - COMPLETE WITH WHITE WELLY BOOTS) THEY CROWD UNCOMFORTABLY IN THE ROOM. THE LEADER OF THE GROUP COLLECTS THEIR MUGS AND HOLDS THEM OUT TOWARDS PHYLLIS.

LEADER: That's us finished then.

PHYLLIS TAKES THE MUGS FROM THEM, DUMBLY. THERE IS AN AWKWARD SILENCE.

PHYLLIS: Would you like another brew?

LEADER SHAKES HIS HEAD, THE OTHERS STAND AROUND LOOKING LIKE SO MANY SHEEP.

LEADER: Na. Best get on. (pause) Tell your man..

HE SHAKES HIS HEAD. THERE ARE NO WORDS.

LEADER: Well. We'd best away. Leave you to..

AGAIN HE RUNS OUT OF WORDS. THE GROUP OF WHITE SUITS BEGIN TO LEAVE THE KITCHEN. AS THE LAST ONE TURNS TO LEAVE, PHYLLIS SPEAKS.

PHYLLIS: Jacky.

THE WHITE SUIT TURNS. HE REMOVES HIS HOOD TO REVEAL THAT HE IS INDEED JACKY.

JACKY: Mrs M.

THERE IS A MOMENT'S SILENCE.

PHYLLIS: You've got work then. Your mother will be pleased?

HE SHAKES HIS HEAD. JACKY. She's.. HE IS ABOUT TO LEAVE.

PHYLLIS: Come away in and have a cup of tea and tell me the news.

HE STANDS, STILL LOOKING AWKWARD.

JACKY: I should..

HE POINTS AT THE DOOR.

PHYLLIS: This day's work done Jacky. You stay back a while, I doubt but they'll no miss you.

JACKY: It doesn't feel right.. after everything you've done for me..

PHYLLIS: It's a bad day's work all right, but I'd rather you and Rab and Duncan were here if there's killing of our beasts to be done. It's better that way, people who cared for them, cared about them, and I ken Duncan will appreciate it. A kent face among all those faceless ones.

JACKY: I niver wanted to.. they're healthy animals.. it's just wrong.

PHYLLIS: Some things right and wrong can't make any sense of Jacky. But you're a man and you've done a man's job the day. Don't be ashamed of that.

Come on now, sit down and tell me what's happening in the town.

HE SITS AT THE TABLE AND SHE MAKES HIM A CUP OF TEA. SHE SITS NEXT TO HIM. HE NURSES THE TEA IN HIS HANDS AS IF HE'S CHILLED TO THE BONE.

PHYLLIS: So what's the news wi' your ma?

JACKY SHAKES HIS HEAD.

JACKY: She's back in the hospital. Emphesima or some such.. I don't know. They look at me like.. (he nearly breaks down) .. you know that look.

PHYLLIS: Oh lad. You've a stomach full of death on you the now all right. But you're a strong one, you'll see it through.

JACKY BRUSHES AWAY A TEAR.

JACKY: Aye, I'll get by. It's just the suffering..

PHYLLIS: There's enough of that and to spare, eh? But your ma kens you love her and that's worth a lot boy, don't you forget it.

JACKY: Aye, I ken she does. An' I dae. I just wish I could help her mair.

PHYLLIS: Sometimes we cannae help. Just love. And sometimes that means taking hard decisions.

JACKY: And what about you? How're you daein' wi' all this?

PHYLLIS: Ach, we'll get by.

JACKY: I mean YOU.

PHYLLIS: Me? Och, at least I'll soon be able to go get some messages for myself. It's never the same wi' other folk daein' yer messages. I'm dreamin' o' a nice firm tomato I can tell you.

JACKY: And you and him. Are you okay? Are you..?

SHE BREAKS IN.

PHYLLIS: Are we together? Facing it together. (pause) I'm still here Jacky, that's all I can tell you.

SHE PICKS UP THE TEAPOT AND CROSSES TO THE RANGE. SHE SPEAKS THE NEXT LINE WITH HER BACK TO HIM.

PHYLLIS: But for how much longer I'm here boy, I just don't know.

HE CROSSES TO HER, PUTS HIS ARMS ROUND HER, LEADS HER BACK TO THE TABLE, SITS HER DOWN AND HOLDS HER HAND.

JACKY: Please. Please don't cry. (pause) Phyllis. Don't. It will pass. You said so yourself. You're bigger than this. You're bigger than all of this.

PHYLLIS: This is my life Jacky. My home. My life. And I don't know as I want it any more. (pause) But I don't feel I've got any choice. I've been stuck in here so long and I've nowhere to go if I could get out, but staying here is like watching my life die in front of my eyes.

JACKY SQUEEZES HER HAND.

JACKY: I don't know what to say. What can I do..?

SHE PULLS HERSELF TOGETHER - GIVES HIM A WEAK SMILE. TAKES HER HAND FROM HIS, PATS IT AND WIPES AWAY THE TEARS FROM HER EYES.

PHYLLIS: What can any of us do eh? There's nothing. Me, you, none of us. We're all in a game being played out by folks as don't even think we really exist. Not as real people. Just as news items. Faces on the tele. Marginal voters. Numbers. Not real people. Not people you'd meet, have a drink wi' down the pub. We're no more real to them than the starving folk in Africa. They don't even care. Today's news item. Forgotten tomorrow when a bigger story comes along. Swept back under the carpet where we belong. It's not just the animals. Not just the meat. Seems as they don't want anything we've got to give anymore. Maybe they niver did.

SHE PULLS HERSELF UP.

PHYLLIS: But we're still here. So. We just go on. Existing. Giving. It's all we can do.

JACKY: I feel so useless. I feel I've betrayed you. Betrayed us all.

PHYLLIS: Jacky. Never you think that.

THERE IS A LONG PAUSE. JACKY FINISHES HIS TEA. PHYLLIS STANDS UP, SUPPORTING HERSELF ON THE AGA, RALLYING HERSELF.

PHYLLIS: You know what son?

JACKY: What?

PHYLLIS: I think you've saved me. Saved us. I really think you might have.

JACKY: Na. I've done nothing...

PHYLLIS: You're here boy. Talking wi' me. Makin' me real. That's enough. Now, you get along to the hospital. Give your ma my love. Tell her she's got a fine boy - but then I'm sure she kens that already.

HE STANDS UP.

JACKY: I can stay if you need me..

SHE SHAKES HER HEAD.

PHYLLIS: You go work your magic somewhere else now, Jacky.

JACKY: If you're sure.

PHYLLIS: I'm sure.

HE CROSSES TO HER. HUGS HER.

PHYLLIS: Now I'd best get on wi' ma man's tea. (pause) Where was he?

JACKY: Him and Rab wis cleaning up. In the barn.

PHYLLIS: Maybe I'll go out and fetch him in.

JACKY: I don't think you should go in there the now. It's no.. it's too..

PHYLLIS: Aye. Maybe you're right. I'll leave it to the men eh? I've seen enough things to ken there's some things I dinna have to see. (pause) So. You'll be back for the cleansing? After all this? There should be three months hosing like as not Duncan says. You'll come back for that?

JACKY NODS.

PHYLLIS: See. It goes on. Same but different. But still going on.

HE TURNS TO LEAVE AND CROSSES TO THE DOOR. EFFECTS A CHIRPY TONE AS HE LEAVES.

JACKY: See you Mrs M.

SHE REJOINDERS IN THE SAME TONE.

PHYLLIS: Aye. See you the morn.

JACKY: If not the morn, the morn's morn.

SHE LAUGHS.

PHYLLIS: Or the morn's, morn's morn.

SHE WAVES A DISHCLOTH AT HIM.

PHYLLIS: Away hame wi' ye boy.

HE LEAVES. SHE TURNS TO THE SINK.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE 2

THE BARN. EVENING. DUNCAN SITS ON A BALE IN THE MIDDLE OF A HUGE EMPTY BARN. HE IS OBLIVIOUS TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD. FOR A MOMENT WE THINK HE'S CRYING, BUT THEN WE SEE THAT HE'S FOCUSSED ON TRYING TO FIX SOME BITS OF CHINA BACK TOGETHER AGAIN. THE CHINA CUPS FROM THE KITCHEN. HE HOLDS ONE UP AGAINST THE LIGHT. SHAKES HIS HEAD. PUTS IT DOWN AGAIN. A FIGURE IN WHITE ENTERS FROM USL. IT IS JACKY. HE COMES QUITE CLOSE BEHIND DUNCAN WHO IS SEEMINGLY QUITE UNAWARE OF HIS ENTRANCE.

JACKY: That's me away then Mr M.

DUNCAN TURNS ROUND. HOLDS THE CHINA UP TO JACKY.

DUNCAN: It's useless son. It's all bloody useless. Cannae fix it.

JACKY DOESN'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY. HE'S ABOUT TO LEAVE WHEN DUNCAN GESTURES HIM TO SIT DOWN ON THE BALE. JACKY SITS DOWN BESIDE DUNCAN.

DUNCAN: Listen boy.

THEY SIT FOR A MOMENT. THERE IS AN ACHING SILENCE.

JACKY: What?

DUNCAN: Just that. Nothing. A big empty barn as holds up of a hunner cows and nothing. Not even a wee bird cheeping. Nothing. They ken, you ken. The birds. They ken death's in the air. (pause) They said it was like that in the war. At the concentration camps. When they came to liberate. Just dead bodies iverywhere and the skies all silent. No even a bird. (pause) I don't ken if it's true. What is true any more anyways? (he shakes his head.) It's a bad job.

JACKY POINTS TO HIS WHITE SUIT.

JACKY: I'm sorry Mr M. I had to take the work..

DUNCAN GIVES A HOLLOW LAUGH.

DUNCAN: An' it wasn't you it would ha' been some other gowk eh? We all had tae dae it. We all took part. What kind o' a story is it eh? They get us to kill our own healthy animals, they've got us all running scared o'er something we can't see and we haven't got and we all gang along wi' it. Killing our own. An what for. For nothing. (he tugs at Jacky's suit) See that. When I wis a boy, ma brother Donald wis always scaring me, telling me the men in the white suits wid come tae tak' me away. (pause) And now they have. (pause) Take it aff son, eh.

JACKY STRIPS OUT OF HIS WHITE SUIT, ROLLS IT UP IN A BALL AND PLACES IT BESIDE HIM. DUNCAN KICKS IT.

DUNCAN: The men in the white suits. In ma day they'd carry ye aff tae the looney bin. Noo this whole world is crazed and the men in the white suits bring the madness tae us. And we have tae play our parts and doff our caps and say thank you once they're done killing us.

JACKY: So what'll you do now?

DUNCAN: What's tae dae. Nothing. Everything's gone. Everything.

JACKY: You can restock the beasts?

DUNCAN: Aye. Maybe. Cannae bring them back though eh? That bastard Charolais bull. That grey coo - eight sets o' twins and mothered them a'. The prize Limosin cross heifer that took the trophy at the Highland Show year afore last. Now they'll tell you that we breed them to kill them anyways so why... (he nearly breaks down) .. but they dinnae spent a' day every day wi' them. They dinnae ken. You cannae bring things back. You cannae just swop one thing for another. Cannae just start again wi' something else. (pause) I cannae just start again wi' someone else.

HE TAKES A CRUMPLED ENVELOPE OUT OF HIS POCKET. FROM IT HE EXTRACTS A LETTER, SELLOTAPED BACK TOGETHER. DUNCAN See this. HE OFFERS IT TO JACKY. JACKY DOESN'T WANT TO TAKE IT.

JACKY: What's it?

DUNCAN: A letter. From her. Read it.

JACKY SHAKES HIS HEAD, REFUSES THE LETTER DUNCAN IS TRYING TO FORCE ON HIM.

JACKY: It's for you. Private.

DUNCAN: READ IT.

HIS VOICE BOOMS OUT IN THE EMPTY BARN. JACKY TAKES THE LETTER. READS IT.

DUNCAN: She's gonnae leave me.

JACKY: She's not.

DUNCAN: She wants to.

JACKY: She doesn't. It doesn't say she wants to leave. She doesn't want to leave. She just..

DUNCAN: She just can't stand to stay wi' me. (pause) What'll I dae wi'out her Jacky? I've got nothing now. Nothing except her. Not even her. I cannae get any of it back and I dinnae ken what to dae about it. Ma heart's fair broken and I cannae restock that eh? (pause) I'm sorry son. It's not your business.

JACKY: You should talk to her. Just talk. Tell her how you feel. Listen to how she feels. You can sort it out between you.

DUNCAN: Aye we can talk. And sometimes we can even listen. But we cannae have a conversation, ken. What we say and what we hear never adds

up to something we can agree on. I feel as I'm sitting here watching my life die right in front of my eyes.

THERE IS A MOMENT OF SILENCE. DUNCAN LOOKS AT THE LETTER. WE HEAR RECORDED, SOFT, PHYLLIS' VOICE

PHYLLIS: (recorded) Staying here is like watching my life die in front of my eyes.

JACKY SEEMS TO HAVE HEARD IT. HE DOESNT' KNOW HOW TO RESPOND.

JACKY: I don't know Mr M. You just have to.. to go on. To keep trying. There's nothing else is there?

DUNCAN: Aye maybe so. Wise head on young shoulders eh? Or dae I just pull the trigger one mair time and put an end to the whole thing? I'm just sitting here and thinkin' ma boy Kevin was right. Maybe it isn't worth it any more. Maybe it niver was.

JACKY: You cannae dae that Mr M. What good would that dae?

DUNCAN: There's no good left. Only nothing.

JACKY: But it's not just about you is it? How bad are we sitting here feeling because we've lost some beasts we've cared for. And your son's dead and my mum's about dead and we're all grieving for people and animals that we've loved. D'you want to have your wife feeling like this about you? Don't you want to spare her any more pain? I love my mum, but she's dying and she's in pain dying and I'm sitting here hoping she'll die soon, because then she'll no be in pain, and my pain's nothing compared tae hers. But your wife's in pain too and you can think to give her more. Can you say you love her if you dae that?

DUNCAN: I do love her. I do. You, wee boy, you ken nothing about love.

JACKY: I ken nothing about your kind of love maybe. My kind of love's not about causing pain. Seems your kind is thinking of yourself first. She

loves this farm. We all know that. It's her life too same as it's yours. It's both your lives, the gither. And in this letter here, she's telling you she doesn't ken what to dae for the best for you, so she's thinking to go away to let you make the choices. She's trying to stop your pain. She's not stopping her own. And you're just thinking about yourself. (he realises this is his boss he's talking to.) I'm sorry Mr M. I said it's not my business. But you showed me that letter, you..

DUNCAN: You're right boy. I did that. An' I think maybe you're right about some o' the other stuff too. Like it's no your business. I shouldn't have brought you intae it. You should gang hame and spend what time you've got wi' yer mother.

JACKY GETS UP. SOLEMN. HE STRETCHES OUT HIS HAND TO SHAKE DUNCAN'S.

JACKY: Mr M.

DUNCAN STANDS UP AND TAKES HIS HAND.

DUNCAN: Jacky.

JACKY: I'm sorry for it all Mr M. I'll be off. Thanks for gie'in me a start in farming.. I..

HE WALKS TOWARDS THE EXIT OF THE BARN. DUNCAN CALLS AFTER HIM.

DUNCAN: It's been a hell of a day son. A crazy day.

HE PICKS UP THE WHITE SUIT.

DUNCAN: Don't forget your white suit.

JACKY SHAKES HIS HEAD.

JACKY: I'm o'er wi' that. I cannae dae this again. Not after the day.

DUNCAN NODS.

DUNCAN: Shall I put it on the fire eh?

JACKY NODS BACK, THEN TURNS TO LEAVE ONCE MORE.

DUNCAN: So - you'll be back Monday for to start hosing down the buildings?

JACKY: 'f you want me.

DUNCAN: Aye lad. I telt you. 's long as there's work here there's a job for you. (pause) One condition.

JACKY: What's that?

DUNCAN: You dinnae mention any o' this in here. Tae anyone. Eh?

JACKY: Aye, right Mr M.

DUNCAN: Hold up then, I'd best get in and see what the wife's got for ma tea.

HE WINKS AT JACKY.

DUNCAN: Cannae keep women waiting eh son?

JACKY AND DUNCAN EXIT USL.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE 3

THE PUB. SET UP AS IN ACT ONE. THE BARMAN'S PRESENCE IS ONLY JUST VISIBLE BEHIND THE BAR UPSTAGE. THE ONLY CUSTOMERS ARE JACKY, RAB AND ANOTHER MAN, TO BE KNOWN AS IAIN.

IAIN: It'll be May.

RAB: It never will.

IAIN: It will.

RAB: Na. Sixth of June. They'll wait while sixth of June.

IAIN: Money on it?

RAB: You mark my words. By the sixth of June the foot and mouth "crisis" will be under control. You'll see. The rate they're going there'll be nae fucking animals left in the country by then.

IAIN: 'Twill not be all clear by then. Six months at the least. I mind sixty seven. It went on fer months. They cannae wait that long. And we don't count anyways. They'll just go on and have the election wi'out us. They'll no be countin' our votes.

RAB: I never said the foot and mouth will be over. But you'll see, it'll no be news by June. They'll stop reporting it. They've done the fires, they've closed the countryside, we're just shut off like a plague zone and they'll leave us tae stew.

IAIN: Seen them signs on the roads? Blair fiddles while Britain burns. Great eh?

JACKY: I thought you wis a Labour man Iain?

IAIN: Aye. Born and bred. But no New Labour. They don't care for the country. They ken nothing about it. New Labour's about majority rule and the majority lives in the city. We're yesterdays men. We're nothing.

JACKY: See I read in the paper the day that farmers are getting big pay outs. Millionaires they said.

RAB: Oh aye. You met any o' them farmers Jacky? They'll no get what's due them, no here any rate. You ken that. An' you Iain. Is your boy not working out rates for the ministry?

IAIN: Aye. Some folk'll dae a'right, but they're the ones who can turn shit to gold any time. Your average farmer, he's screwed. At the beginning. When you had some choice, if you'd said "take all my healthy animals and kill them and gie me the cost" they wis paying not bad then. When they thought that would contain it. But now. You offer up animals to be kilt now, you'll be screwed. An' if they make you kill them, they're all movin' so fast that they're just gie'in a standard rate an' no one's checking the beasts properly to make sure they get the right price. An' what's standard rate worth now anyway. What's a sheep worth now, or in six months time, or a year. Nothing.

RAB: See, I might as well huv taken them sheep an' butchered them myself. Twenty pound a head. If you're lucky. But they're still charging folk o'er the odds ta buy lamb eh? Processing costs. When they've shut doon all the local abbatoirs. 's been mismanagement from the start. Sending animals half roon the country tae be kilt. It's crazy policy, and when it comes doon tae it, they're turning it on us and blamin' us.

IAIN: An see the forms. Pages an' pages o' bloody paperwork 'f you want tae move one field tae the next. I tell you, Duncan's well aff wi'oot them.

JACKY: A farmer wi'oot stock cannae be well off.

IAIN: See you, young man. You should get yersel' oot o' this madness. You've got a chance tae make something else of your life.

JACKY: But I like farming.

IAIN: An I like drinking pure malt whisky, but here's me drinkin' a pint.

RAB: He's got a point Jacky. See what we're daein' the noo, it's no farming. It's niver going tae be farming again.

IAIN: An see these guys wi' sheep and cows still in their fields. It's just a longer agony for them. See the conditions these beasts are in. Six month ago 'f we kept them like that we'd be had up fer cruelty. An now, some guy in a suit or an army uniform tells us we've tae watch they animals suffer an' we cannae dae anything about it. The kilt one's got off light, I'm telling you.

THEY DRINK THEIR PINTS IN SILENCE FOR A MINUTE. THEN IAIN TURNS TO RAB.

IAIN: How's Meg?

RAB: She's going crazy. I've talked tae the vet. Maybe I'll have tae pit her doon.

IAIN: Na. She's a great wee dug that. You cannae dae that.

RAB: Her hearts in her work. She kens nothing else. She cannae sit around the house playing pet, and there's nothing daein' down at Drumrigg. An' they restock it'll no be fer months yet. I cannae sit see her suffer.

IAIN: D'you think Duncan will gang on in the farming?

RAB SHRUGS HIS SHOULDERS.

RAB: He may. May not. No such thing as a certainty. An' will I? Maybe I'll away to New Zealand, like Duncan's boy. Maybe he will an' he sees sense.

JACKY LOOKS VERY WORRIED BY THIS SITUATION.

JACKY: He will restock. Surely. I mean, I ken it'll be slow, but..

RAB: Dinnae you hold onto false hopes on account o' them Jacky.

JACKY: They've been real good tae me.

RAB: Aye, that's as it should be, but that doesn't mean they've the stomach tae gang on. Duncan's past fifty, Phyllis is fast heading the same way. Their backs're broken, an his hearts no in anything any more. See you, take my advice and look somewhere else, whiles there's somewhere else tae look. When folk start restocking it'll be like musical chairs. Too many men and no enough jobs. Gin you jump, one way or the other, you'd better jump soon. You spend the next three months on the end of a pressure hose, doesnae guarantee you a job for life ma boy.

IAIN: An I heard Duncan wis selling aff the big tractor. He's niver had his compensation yet an' the banks champin' at the bit.

JACKY: But whit would I dae? I dinnae ken nothing but farming.

RAB: Did you not dae computers or something at school eh?

JACKY: A bit. No much but.

RAB: You get down the council son. They'll retrain you. There's gonna be some jobs going round here but they'll no be in farming. In computing. That's the future. Eat all the steak you like, the silcon chip's where we're all heading.

THEY SIT IN SILENCE FOR A MOMENT SIPPING THEIR PINTS.

IAIN: So what's the latest total then?

RAB: The local news last night said seventy eight confirmed in Dumfries and Galloway.

IAIN: An' the rest.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE 4

THE KITCHEN. SAME AS EVER, BUT IT IS EMPTY. ENTER DUNCAN AND RAB FROM OUTSIDE.(STAGE RIGHT) THEY DON'T SEEM TO NOTICE THAT PHYLLIS ISN'T THERE, BUT SIT DOWN AT THE TABLE AS USUAL. THEY SIT FOR A MINUTE, AS IF WAITING. FINALLY DUNCAN SPEAKS.

DUNCAN: I'm sorry about Meg.

RAB SHAKES HIS HEAD.

RAB: 'Twas best for her.

DUNCAN: Aye. Bad job but. Tae lose a good dug like that.

RAB: We're a' losers out o' this though, eh? An it was best for her.

DUNCAN SHAKES HIS HEAD.

DUNCAN: Aye. A bad job. (pause) I'm parched. (pause) Tea?

RAB: Aye.

DUNCAN GETS UP, CROSSES TO THE AGA, PUTS THE KETTLE ON. GATHERS MUGS FROM THE DRAINER AND BEGINS THE PROCESS. THE INTERNAL DOOR OPENS AND PHYLLIS ENTERS. DUNCAN TURNS TO SEE HER, AND SHE WAVES HIM BACK TO HIS SEAT.

PHYLLIS: I'll do that.

DUNCAN: I'm no useless. I can make tea.

SHE SHRUGS.

PHYLLIS: As you like. (she sits down beside Rab) Cold day eh?

RAB: Aye. Fingers fair frozen from that pressure wash.

PHYLLIS: You'll be ready for your dinner then?

RAB: Aye. Fair starvin.

DUNCAN BRINGS THE TEA ACROSS. SITS DOWN. PHYLLIS GETS UP AND CROSSES TO THE AGA, BEGINS GETTING DINNER OUT OF THE STOVE.

PHYLLIS: No Jacky?

DUNCAN: Niver turned in the day again.

PHYLLIS: Oh.

RAB: I doubt but his ma's taken a turn for the worse.

DUNCAN: Aye. That's a sair fecht. A bad job. A good lad like that..

PHYLLIS BRINGS ACROSS THE DINNER, PLACES IT DOWN IN FRONT OF THEM. SITS DOWN BESIDE THEM.

PHYLLIS: Here you go.

THEY BEGIN TO EAT AS THE LIGHTS DIM. AS THE LIGHTS RETURN TO NORMAL TO INDICATE THE PASSAGE OF TIME, PHYLLIS GATHERS THE PLATES AND STACKS THEM IN THE SINK. RAB RISES FROM HIS SEAT.

RAB: Bye, that's fair set me up fer the afternoon. Thanks Mrs M.

DUNCAN: I'll be there right on.

RAB: Nae bother.

HE EXITS.

DUNCAN TURNS TO FACE PHYLLIS.

DUNCAN: So.

PHYLLIS: So?

DUNCAN: Can we.. (pause) Talk?

PHYLLIS: Talk?

DUNCAN:Aye. Talk.

PHYLLIS: What about?

DUNCAN IS PERPLEXED.

DUNCAN: Hiy, will you sit down woman. I want to talk to you.

SHE SITS DOWN, DEFENSIVE.

DUNCAN: I want us to talk.

PHYLLIS: You want us to talk? (pause) About what?

DUNCAN: Feelings.

SHE IS SURPRISED.

PHYLLIS: What?

DUNCAN: About our feelings.

THERE IS A MOMENT'S SILENCE.

PHYLLIS: Feelings about what?

DUNCAN PULLS OUT THE CRUMPLED LETTER AND THROWS IT ON THE TABLE BETWEEN THEM. PHYLLIS STARTS. THEY LOOK AT EACH OTHER FOR AN UNCOMFORTABLY LONG TIME.

PHYLLIS: You weren't meant to get that.

DUNCAN: So why did you write it?

PHYLLIS: I don't know. For myself. To straighten things out.. because we can't talk.

DUNCAN: Aye. So that's why I'm saying. Let's talk now.

PHYLLIS: It's too late.

DUNCAN: I'm here and you're here. Both still living, just. Then it's no too late. Is it?

PHYLLIS: Oh, I just don't know.

DUNCAN CROSSES TO THE SEAT USUALLY OCCUPIED BY JACKY AND SITS BESIDE PHYLLIS.

DUNCAN: I ken this is hard. It's hard for me too. I don't know what to say. What to do. I'm scunnered by the whole thing. But I'm trying here. Maybe too late, maybe too little, but I'm trying. (pause) It seems to me as we've got nothing left but each other. Maybe that's all we deserve. Maybe we're just sitting here watching our lives fade away, and maybe we've got a chance to carry on somehow, but either way, I just want you to know that I love you.

PHYLLIS: You've niver said that since..

DUNCAN: Hiy. You ken the score. What Scotsman tells his wife he loves her wi'oot a drink on him? Eh?

HE TRIES A SMILE.

PHYLLIS: I ken you love me. That's no it.

DUNCAN: Then what?

PHYLLIS: I don't know. I really don't know.

DUNCAN: Well, if you dinnae ken how you feel, how can you get mad when I cannae work it oot?

IT LOOKS LIKE HE'S BEGINNING TO LOSE HIS TEMPER.

PHYLLIS: It's just. I wonder if it's..

THERE IS A DEATHLY SILENCE.

DUNCAN: You wonder if it's worth it any more?

SHE NODS. SILENCE.

DUNCAN: An' dae you no think I'm wonderin' that every day of ma life tae? Dae you no think I've heard them words every day since Kevin first said them? An is Kevin right?

PHYLLIS: Kevin's dead.

DUNCAN: Aye. An' we're still livin'. Maybe mair existing than livin' and maybe wi'oot any hope o' anything better tae come. But we're still here and I won't let him be right. I can't let him be right. (looks straight at Phyllis) And ma boy's right, what's left for me? For us?

PHYLLIS: I put that letter in the bin Duncan. I ripped it up. I'm still here.

DUNCAN: Aye, but the question I'm asking myself is - why are you still here?

PHYLLIS: An' where else can I go?

DUNCAN: Exactly.

PHYLLIS: I didn't mean it like that. I just meant.. there's no choices left for us.

DUNCAN: You're damned right there. But I don't think we've ever had a choice. We've just woken up to the fact. They men in white suits have shown us we have no choice at all. Live. Die. None of it matters and none of it means anything and (pause) And none of it's worth it any more. So. Go. Stay. Whatever. What's the difference?

PHYLLIS: The difference is, what we want.

DUNCAN: It's no what we want, it's what we've got. An that's nothing.

PHYLLIS: Each other?

DUNCAN: An' is that the next thing to go? (pause) Because I'm telling you Phyllis. I'm on the edge here. I'm standing looking right over the edge and I'm praying for a gust o' wind tae push me right o'er. An' the way things are going, it will, it surely will. Any day now. I cannae keep getting up in the morning looking into empty barns and out on empty fields and tellin' myself I'm a farmer. I'm nothing noo. Not a farmer. Not a husband. Not even a man. So if you don't want me any more, you just tell me and I'll stop standing firm against that wind.

PHYLLIS: An have you never thought that's how I'm feeling too? You may be the one works in the fields, wi' the mud and the blood on yer wellies, but I'm part of this too. This hurts me too. This is killing me too. This is my life. This is my only life. What hurts you hurts me and we're just rolling round in circles hurting each other and..and I just want it to stop.

DUNCAN STANDS UP.

DUNCAN: But that's it. It's not gonnae stop. Is it? The only way to stop it is to walk away. An' I cannae, I'm not gonnae, I won't walk away and let them win. I ken I've lost but I'm no havin' no smarmy anyone rub ma face in it. I'll gang doon fighting. I've gone doon fighting. You stay or you gang, I'll still be here. Fighting till ma last breath's done.

AND HE EXITS TO THE OUTSIDE. PHYLLIS SITS DOWN AT THE TABLE. THE LIGHTS DIM, THEN RISE AGAIN, ONCE MORE TIME HAS PASSED. SHE GETS UP FROM THE TABLE, WASHES UP SOME OF THE PLATES. THE DOOR OPENS. SHE DOESN'T TURN ROUND. JACKY ENTERS.

JACKY: Mrs.M. PHYLLIS Jacky.

JACKY: Are you busy?

PHYLLIS: Na, na, son. Come away in and get a cup of tea.

HE SITS DOWN. SHE PUTS ON THE KETTLE.

PHYLLIS: Your ma?

HE SHRUGS.

JACKY: Oh. They're having her out the hospital for a while. I dinnae ken how long. I think it's just as they need the bed.

PHYLLIS BRINGS OVER THE TEA.

PHYLLIS: And how is she.. in herself?

JACKY: Oh, aye. Fine. Far as I can tell. (pause) You cannae tell but, really, can you?

PHYLLIS: No. You can't.

JACKY: Anyway's. I came to show you something.

PHYLLIS: What's that Jacky?

HE REACHES INTO HIS POCKET AND BRINGS OUT A PIECE OF PAPER.

PHYLLIS: What's this?

JACKY: It's a computer driving licence?

PHYLLIS: A what?

JACKY: They call it a European Computer Driving Licence. I went to some evening classes. Free, they were. An' when you finish a' the stuff, they gie you this.

PHYLLIS: Well.

JACKY: I just thought. Since you wis there when I got my real driving licence, you'd like to..

PHYLLIS: Yes. Thanks Jacky. (pause) I never knew you had computer L plates.

THEY LAUGH TOGETHER.

PHYLLIS: So. What do you do wi' a computer driving licence then?

JACKY: I can get a job.

PHYLLIS: A job is it?

JACKY HANGS HIS HEAD.

JACKY: Aye. It's. Fer my ma. Ken. Whiles she's at home, she wants me there. An' I can do some of this work from home while I mind her. Or I can get a job wi' more regular hours. Be there when she needs me.. or.. More money.. some kind of a future. They said on the course there's loads of things you can dae.

PHYLLIS: Well that's good then.

JACKY: Aye. (pause) There's only one thing.

PHYLLIS: What's that?

JACKY:I don't want to dae it.

PHYLLIS Ah.

JACKY: I ken it's good money. And I ken it's the future. But I.. I just don't want..

PHYLLIS: Jacky. We all have to make sacrifices. You ken that. An some of them don't have anything to do with getting up at four in the morning and working seven days a week even on Christmas. Some of our sacrifices are what other people, people on the outside, see as us making our lives easier.

You do it Jacky. You take what they're calling an opportunity and you make your sacrifice, cause you know that it'll pass tae. And surely one day we'll need a computer to run a farm an' there are still farms to run. Things go on, eh? Same but different.

JACKY: I've no choice. What with ma ma and.. (pause) I feel like I've let you down.

PHYLLIS: No. You're the one's been let down, son. We all have. We're all in the same big leaky boat. Baling and paddling for all we're worth. But it's getting us nowhere. Pulling together or pulling apart, it's all the same. We're sinking. That's for sure. But you're young. You can swim for the shore. And you do that Jacky. You swim son.

JACKY: How will I tell.. him?

PHYLLIS: He kens. He kens your ma's sick. He kens about having no choice and making sacrifices. He's a farmer Jacky. He kens.

JACKY: But I want to come back. I'll come back. If I can. When ma ma..

PHYLLIS: I ken Jacky. And I'll be here. Waiting. If you do. And you ken that when your ma goes.. I'll be here.

HE STANDS UP.

JACKY: Well. I'd best go and tell him.

SHE STANDS TOO. THERE IS A MOMENT'S PAUSE AND THEN THEY EMBRACE.

JACKY: An' if you need me..

PHYLLIS: An' you come back visit whenever you like..

JACKY: Thanks Phyllis.

PHYLLIS: Thank you Jacky.

THEY STAND APART. HE TURNS TO LEAVE.

JACKY: Morn's morn Mrs M.

PHYLLIS: Aye lad. Morn,s morn. Or morn's morn's morn.

JACKY SMILES AS HE LEAVES.

PHYLLIS: When the cows come home, eh?

SHE STANDS ALONE IN THE KITCHEN.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE 5

THE PUB. SOME MONTHS LATER. THE BARMAN AS USUAL IS PRESENT BUT ALMOST INVISIBLE UPSTAGE LEFT. THE TABLES ARE SLIGHTLY FURTHER SPACED AND THERE ARE SEVERAL PEOPLE STANDING FACING THE BAR (UPSTAGE) PHYLLIS SITS ALONE AT ONE TABLE. DUNCAN TURNS FROM THE BAR AND BRINGS THE DRINKS BACK TO THE TABLE. HE IS WEARING A SUIT. HE LOOKS STRANGE IN THIS SMART GET UP. HE SITS DOWN ACROSS FROM PHYLLIS. HE LIFTS HIS GLASS AND CLINKS HERS WITH A TOAST.

DUNCAN: Twenty five years.

SHE NODS. HE SIPS HIS DRINK THOUGHTFULLY.

DUNCAN: Aye. We've seen some times.

PHYLLIS: Have that.

DUNCAN: What did the boy say on the phone?

PHYLLIS: Martin?

DUNCAN: Aye.

PHYLLIS: Oh. Just to wish us happy anniversary, you know.

DUNCAN: Ah.

PHYLLIS: And Shona sent a card. With flowers.

DUNCAN: Hmm. She'll no be home for Christmas though?

PHYLLIS: She didn't say.

DUNCAN: She'll no. Too busy. Running to keep still.

SILENCE.

PHYLLIS: The notices were up in the butchers. Jacky's mum. Died Tuesday.

DUNCAN: You'll gang tae the funeral?

PHYLLIS: Aye. Monday it is.

SILENCE.

DUNCAN: Gie him my regards.

PHYLLIS: Can I tell him his job's here for him?

DUNCAN: He'll no be back that lad.

PHYLLIS: You think?

DUNCAN: Na. Once they get a taste o' it. (pause) He'll no be back. (pause) Cannae blame him.

PHYLLIS: He might. We can offer.

DUNCAN: Gie him another swig frae the poisoned chalice. I don't think that's dae'in him a favour but.

PHYLLIS: At least give him the choice.

DUNCAN: Ah, a choice is it? Which o' the rest o' us gets a choice eh?

SILENCE. TWO OTHER MEN TURN ROUND FROM THE BAR. WE RECOGNISE THEM AS RAB AND IAIN. IAIN EXITS STAGE RIGHT AND RAB IS ABOUT TO TURN BACK TO THE BAR WHEN DUNCAN HAILS HIM ACROSS TO THE SPARE TABLE BESIDE THEM.

DUNCAN: Hiy. Come an hae a seat wi' us Rab.

RAB CROSSES SLOWLY, UNCERTAINLY.

RAB: I dinnae want tae intrude on..

DUNCAN: Intrude. What d'you think. Twenty five years wed and I think we've said all as we can say tae each other, no Phyllis?

SHE NODS. RAB SITS AT THE NEXT TABLE.

RAB: If you're sure Mrs M.

PHYLLIS: I'm sure Rab.

THEY ALL SIT FOR A MOMENT IN SILENCE.

DUNCAN: Hear about the boy?

RAB: Whit boy's that?

DUNCAN: Jacky.

RAB: Whit's that?

PHYLLIS: His ma.

RAB: Oh. She's gone?

PHYLLIS NODS.

RAB: No afore time eh? Poor boy, he doted on her.

PHYLLIS: And she on him I'm sure.

DUNCAN: Phyllis thinks he'll be wantin' to come back. What d'you think, eh?

RAB CONSIDERS IT FOR A BIT.

RAB: Euan's boy Sam seen him just the other week. Y'll niver guess whit he wis dae'in. Jacky.

DUNCAN: What's that?

RAB: Working for the council. On their website thing. Fer foot and mouth.

DUNCAN: Web site eh?

RAB: Oh aye. (pause) Have you no seen it? Quite the thing. The information. Incredible.

PHYLLIS: What sort of information?

RAB: Oh, it'll tell you all sorts. About what to claim and dealin' wi' the slurry an'..

PHYLLIS: And all those forms you try not to look at eh Duncan?

DUNCAN: Bloody paperwork. They take away the beasts and then gie us paperwork instead. Bloody computers.

PHYLLIS: Maybe we should get one.

DUNCAN: A computer. What for would we want a computer?

PHYLLIS: Keep things straight.

DUNCAN: Ha.

RAB: It's no a bad idea but. Ken, wi' the internet and all you can hae that much information a' in the one place. Stored on your computer, no need tae hae files and papers a' ower the place. Keeps you up wi' the times.

DUNCAN: Aye. But then ye have tae learn the damned thing. I ken how tae read a piece o' paper at least. I've no time tae learn computers.

PHYLLIS: No? While's your waiting to restock. You seem to be under my feet day and night the past few weeks.

DUNCAN: It's a young man's game computers.

RAB: That's no true. Euan's sixty if he's a day an' he's "surfin the net" a' hours day an' night so his Sam says. (laughs) Sam reckons he's looking for the porn but cannae find it. (pause) Sorry Mrs M. No offence meant by it.

BUT PHYLLIS HAS BEEN MILES AWAY, HATCHING A PLAN.

PHYLLIS: If we got a computer, we could maybe get the boy back to work it?

DUNCAN: What daft scheme's this then?

PHYLLIS: Jacky. He can work a computer now. He could come and teach you. Or me. You can use it for stock inventories and to pay the bills and..

DUNCAN: Pay the bills.. money's what we need for that. And money we haven't got is what we'd need for a computer.

RAB: Sam says ye can get a real cheap deal the noo. They're fallin' ower themselves tae help the farmers..

DUNCAN: Aye, with computers and that, no with farming!

RAB: It's the future Duncan. Cannae avoid it.

DUNCAN: It's no ma future.

RAB: But for the young folk.

DUNCAN: An' Jacky's used tae workin' in a clean office, good hours for good money he's no gonnae thank me for draggin' him away back tae this useless life.

PHYLLIS: You should give him the chance to decide that.

SILENCE.

DUNCAN: I cannae be daein' wi' all these changes. Might fool you folk but it disnae fool me. They can change things as they like. Make Windscale Sellarfield, turn MAFF tae DEFRA, it's the same engine under the bonnet. I mean what is DEFRA anyway. Department for the Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs. What's that when it's at home? Cannae have MAFF any mair cause we've no Agricultural industry, no fishing industry and they're ripping down the forestry at the rate o' knots. So now they've jazzed it up, hidden farming away like it's some kind o' hobby thing tae dae wi' havin' a walk in the country. Wantin' us tae become "stewards of the land" What nonsense. (pause) A hundred and seventy eight cases. In three months. A hundred and seventy eight farmers blighted wi' the foot and mouth virus. Wi' something you cannae even see. An' the rest o' us. The fallout. The casualties o' war. Exclusion zones, contiguous culls, it all adds up to the same thing in the end. They killed the animals and they killed the farmers tae. We can see oot our days pretending there's still farming tae be done, but before we're cold in our graves there'll be nae mair beasts on the land, starter homes a' ower the place and the whole fuckin' lot o' them will be vege-bloody-tarians. An' think o' the methane gas that will produce eh?

SILENCE. RAB TRIES TO LIGHTEN THE SITUATION.

RAB: Still, at least we're not bitter eh?

THIS FALLS ON STONEY GROUND. RAB TRIES AGAIN - WITH PHYLLIS THIS TIME.

RAB: When's the funeral?

PHYLLIS: Monday.

RAB: You gang?

PHYLLIS: Aye.

RAB: Gie him ma best eh?

PHYLLIS: I will.

SILENCE. DUNCAN FINISHES HIS DRINK. PHYLLIS FOLLOWS SUITE.

RAB: Can I get you'se another?

DUNCAN STANDS UP.

DUNCAN: Na. I'm away home to wait for winter.

PHYLLIS: There's no time for waiting, we've to get organised for restocking in spring.

SHE STANDS UP.

PHYLLIS: And see if there's a space we can put a computer in, eh Duncan?

QUIETLY, UNOBTRUSIVELY, DUNCAN TAKES HER HAND AND THEY EXIT THE PUB TOGETHER. RAB SITS, SIPPING HIS PINT. A COUPLE TURN FROM THE BAR, MAKING FOR THE EMPTY SEATS. A YOUNG MAN AND WOMAN, CLOTHED SO THAT YOU MIGHT THINK THEM ANIMAL RIGHTSY TYPE PEOPLE. THEY ARE IN THE MIDDLE OF A CONVERSATION AND DON'T APPEAR TO NOTICE THE EXISTENCE OF RAB - HIS PRESENCE CERTAINLY DOESN'T AFFECT THEIR CONVERSATION IN ANY WAY. BLOKE ..the most terrible thing.

GIRL: I think the shock was how it came out of nowhere. No one expected it. One day fine, then..

BLOKE: And the smoke. The black smoke, filling the sky. They say you could see it from miles around. And the stench. Imagine it. You don't get that from pictures on TV.

GIRL: And the silence after. Where there should be noise. Just silence. Everywhere around. Spooky.

BLOKE: It'll take years to get back to normal.

GIRL: Thing's never get back to normal after that. They can't. The very definition of normal has been changed. Don't you think?

BLOKE: Yeah. And the waste of all those lives.

GIRL: Innocent lives. But, it's brought people together, don't you think? I mean, we all talk to people more freely now, we all feel the sense of loss.

SHE LOOKS AT RAB. WANTS TO PROVE HER POINT.

GIRL: Wasn't it terrible? (pause, her opening gambit seems to have failed.) Do you think they'll rebuild?

RAB: They cannae rebuild. You cannae get back what's been lost.

BLOKE: But they'll have to. Otherwise they win. You can't let the madmen win.

RAB: Sometimes you have no choice son.

THE GIRL SIGHS.

GIRL: September the eleventh eh? The day the world changed for ever.

RAB REALISES THEY'VE BEEN TALKING AT CROSS PURPOSES. HE'S NOT SURPRISED.

RAB: Aye. The world's aye changing. Always a bigger story.

BLOKE: Sorry?

RAB: I've seen a' these things. Myself. Been a part of it.

GIRL: (incredulous) Were you..? Were you there?

RAB: There? I wis here doll. The smoke, the stench, the silence, hunners of thousands of healthy animals lives wasted. Foot and mouth's an old story to you'se now. But no' to us. We're still living wi' it. We'll aye be living wi' it. Fighting the unseen enemy.

THE BLOKE AND THE GIRL LOOK AT EACH OTHER -
SPEECHLESS. RAB FINISHES HIS PINT. STANDS UP.

RAB: We've aye got one eye open waiting for the men in the white suits tae come back again. There's no one can save us. They've killed the countryside a' right - we'll just take a bit longer tae die. But we ken we're a' dead men walking. Country folk.

EXIT RAB.

BLACKOUT. CURTAIN.

ABOUT