

TOFFEE

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ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

Lights up on ALFIE's bedroom. ALFIE is sitting on his single bed, feet in socks against the wall so the back of his head is to the audience, head tilted backwards so he's looking at the ceiling. He fiddles for a while, possibly adjusts glasses that keep falling down because of his position, and arches his head to look directly at the audience a few times. There's a pause. ALFIE looks at the audience while speaking, but gets distracted by things around him. Possibly turns a lamp on and off, or fiddles with sleeve and watch.

ALFIE

Sometimes she'd slip into the house and knock on my bedroom door like, I don't know, it was a front door. Like I had my own house. Which I guess I do.

CHRIS

(Offstage, shouting) ALFIE, I'M TURNING THE FUCKING HEATING OFF.

ALFIE

Well, I share my house. A house. Not with her. She didn't have a key, unless I left mine at hers. By mistake.

Beat.

(Shouting back) GOOD, IT'S FUCKING HOT.

Beat.

CHRIS

(Still offstage, still shouting) WELL I DIDN'T FUCKING TURN IT ON.

GINGER

(Also offstage, shouting) I TURNED IT ON LIKE THREE MINUTES AGO BECAUSE I'M DYING OF HYPOTHERMIA.

CHRIS

(Still offstage, shouting) THEN DIE, *(pause)* OR JUST WEAR THAT JUMPER I GOT YOU FOR CHRISTMAS WITH THE SNOWFLAKE ON IT.

Beat. ALFIE *shuffles about a bit but doesn't sit up.*

ALFIE

It feels like it's always been like this. I can't remember what she looks like. Only in pieces. I could draw some of the moles on her cheek, but I have to...

Beat.

You know, look at photographs. For the specifics of how she worked, works, as a whole.

Beat. ALFIE *sits up, faces the wall for a second, then turns to face the audience. He blinks a few times.*

Beat.

CHRIS *enters the room without knocking. He's holding a small pile of misc. clothing that he puts on the end of ALFIE's bed.*

CHRIS

Oh good, you're not afraid of them. I thought you were.

ALFIE

They thought it was too hot as well. I could tell. (ALFIE *points at a person in the audience*) He's as pink as a conch.

CHRIS

They're just kind of sandy, aren't they?

ALFIE

The inside of the lips are pink. (ALFIE *pulls down his lower lip, as if to demonstrate*)

CHRIS

Well, you're not a fucking conch.

Beat.

She looks a bit like her, you know. (CHRIS *points at somebody else in the audience*)

ALFIE

Maybe. No. I can't tell. (ALFIE *picks up a small frame that contains four passport photos still intact as one sheet. He holds it up, looks at the audience member that CHRIS indicated, thinks, looks back and forth, then puts it down again.*)

They could be cousins, I guess. I don't think they are.

CHRIS

Just ask her then.

ALFIE

I'm not talking to her, she's a stranger. Girls laugh about men that talk to them at bus-stops and stuff, don't they? She used to. And once Ginger kicked that man in the deli.

CHRIS

You are afraid of them.

ALFIE

Only the girls.

CHRIS

I think that makes you a misogynist.

ALFIE

More like a misophobe. Is that a word?

CHRIS

Mysophobia is like a fear of dirt. You know, germs. My uncle has really red fingers cos he washes them so much. Well, that's what he says.

ALFIE

Well I'm not scared of dirt. Just women.

GINGER

(Offstage, shouting) I'M WEARING ONE OF YOUR JUMPERS CHRIS AND I'M STILL COLD YOU'RE A DICK AND I'M GOING TO BURN YOU AS A HEAT SOURCE.

ALFIE

SHUT UP, YOU'RE GOING TO FUCKING RUIN IT ALL.

CHRIS

I'll go and sort Ginger out, she's probably not wearing any socks.

Beat. CHRIS *leaves the way he came.*

ALFIE

I'm not afraid of you. Really. I just need to think for a minute.

ALFIE sits back down and flicks on the radio on his bedside table, next to the photo frame. Preferably it's a functional radio, and it's rigged up to the sound-system so whatever's actually on can be played for a couple of minutes. This scene is not set at any particular time of day, although it's probably the evening, so whatever's on will do. Radio One or Radio Four preferably, but anything as long as there's a DJ or somebody talking. Not the news if possible.

Beat. ALFIE lies down on his bed with his feet just below the pillow, legs bent, head resting on the clothes CHRIS brought in earlier. He glances at the audience nervously. After a minute or so, and while somebody on the radio is talking, GINGER walks in. She is wrapped in a blanket and is barefoot. GINGER turns the radio down to a murmur and sort of caresses it before speaking.

GINGER

I wondered where my radio had gone. I thought one of them had taken it while they were all meant to be taking their seats instead.

ALFIE

It helps me think. Hearing them talk. I don't have to participate, they're aware that I'm there, but I don't have to converse back.

GINGER

Have you seen my slippers? I've lost them.

ALFIE

Of course I haven't. I never find things. Not once they're lost.

GINGER

You find your keys all the time. And you found that washing up glove that Chris had somehow stuck to a window.

ALFIE

I was trying to get across my problem to them without having to actually say it. Now you've fucked it all up. Thanks, Ginger.

GINGER

You haven't told them yet?

Beat. GINGER turns to look at the audience and lets the blanket slip down a bit.

Alfie's girlfriend left him.

ALFIE

That's not exactly it, she didn't just leave me, she -

GINGER

(Turns back to ALFIE) Okay, she left everything. Alfie, are you sure she's not here? She could be one of them, or something. Hard to make out all of their faces. Lights. They're like shiny lights, I don't like looking at them for too long.

ALFIE

I don't think she's here.

SCENE TWO

As the previous scene ends, GINGER picks up her radio, which she turns off entirely, and exits the way she came. ALFIE kicks himself off the bed, combs his hair swiftly, grabs a backpack from the foot of his bed and walks forward to the front of the stage. He slings the backpack on as the curtain comes down. This scene takes place entirely in front of the curtain.

ALFIE

Ginger said she left everything. That's exactly it. She didn't break up with me, she broke up with her life.

Beat.

We were shopping, and I was looking at some CDs in HMV, all the crap they always have on sale, and she went off saying she wanted to see what they had in the world music section. She ran her hand along the back of my neck briefly as she walked off, and smiled.

Beat.

Then she just... vanished. She wasn't in world music. The section looked weedy, so I thought, she'll be in folk or country. No girls were in folk or country. No girls were even in the basement. So I went up to the film section on the first floor, and looked at the films for a few minutes. *Nick and Norah's Infinite Playlist* was still seventeen pounds. I figured she'd get bored and find me, and every now and then somebody walked behind me and I figured it was her, about to slip her arm around me without saying anything.

Beat.

No. So like, you know, I looked around, and thought I'd missed her. I went through all three floors, kind of skittery like by this point, then checked my phone, and there were no texts or anything. I tried calling her but I didn't even get the answering machine that was just her kind of giggling while a Bruce Springsteen song played. There was just, nothing.

Beat.

In case you're thinking she's like, a missing person and I need to go to the police, then don't worry about it. We're at university, right? She officially dropped out. They have the paperwork. The CCTV in HMV shows her walking out alone, like a minute after she said she was going to look at world music. She didn't even look at the section, so it wasn't like its weediness made her leave with disgust or anything. She just decided to go. The police weren't that interested. I'm not sure if she's like, officially missing or not. There aren't any posters up.

Beat.

Her parents say to just chill. She's a special kid and she's got to be allowed to blow about a bit. Like leaves or plastic bags or, like, people sometimes do. She didn't learn to read until she was six or something, I don't know, but basically they think she'll be fine. I don't know why they think that, but they do. Nothing to be done.

Beat.

Beat.

ALFIE takes a discman out of his backpack, untangles the inevitably tangled earphones, sits on the ground and puts in the headphones. He hits play, rifles through his backpack, takes out a beaten up book (nothing academic, a novel - if possible, one that's clearly been read many times) and flicks through it before settling down to read. As soon as he presses play a song should be cued to fill the theatre over the sound-system - preferably The Crystals' 'Then He Kissed Me'. When the song is stopped, ALFIE looks up from his book, takes out one earphone, and stares directly at the audience.

I mean, what would you do? Nothing, right?

SCENE THREE

ALFIE picks up his backpack, puts his book and discman back inside it, then slips behind the curtain. The audience is left staring at the empty curtain for a few seconds, then GINGER and CHRIS enter from the side of the stage. They're holding hands, and they're laughing about something, but after a few seconds they stop and look a bit embarrassed as they realise how close they are to the audience.

GINGER

I keep forgetting they're here. Do you think she's here? Sometimes I wonder if she's like, curious. Maybe she cut her hair. Maybe she's that girl at the back, who's kind of sitting as if she's not really here. *(Points to girl in the audience).*

CHRIS

You sound like Alfie.

GINGER

No, I don't. Alfie's all like IT'S LIKE SHE DOESN'T ACTUALLY EXIST and DO YOU THINK SHE'S ONE OF THOSE MANIC DREAM PIXIE GIRLS and I'VE FORGOTTEN WHAT SHE LOOKS LIKE. We all have, Alfie. Get over it.

CHRIS

I haven't forgotten what she looks like, what are you on about?

GINGER

Well, I mean like, you know what she looks like, but it's like you can't quite remember her in motion. Like, you can't quite picture her just eating some of your jam then apologising and buying you like a whole new jar the next week. Her face is kind of a blur, doing that.

CHRIS

That is exactly what she'd do.

Beat.

I think.

Beat. CHRIS looks out at the audience, shrugs, and scratches his head.

It's been a few months. Alfie was the most thrown by it, obviously, but it's pretty weird for all of us. Especially her housemates, right? Ginger, did Jay say he'd come by to tell us about her room?

GINGER shrugs, but as CHRIS opens his mouth, JAY stumbles onstage from behind the curtain. He dusts himself off and looks apologetically between Chris, Ginger and the audience.

JAY

Chris, sorry mate, I forgot. I mean, then you said my name and I remembered. I was just kind of sitting back there reading. Have you seen the programme?

CHRIS

No, Jay. Weren't you going to tell us about her room?

JAY

Oh yeah, you're dissecting Alfie's Annie Hall. His Helen. Only instead of running away with Paris she's run away to Paris. Well, possibly. Probably not though.

GINGER

Jay -

JAY

Yeah, okay. Um, well basically she didn't tell any of us about it, leaving, you know. And she didn't act all caring and weird beforehand, just... you know, normal. For her. But Alfie phoned us and was like IS SHE THERE and I was like well, no, and then we never saw her again. She didn't collect her stuff, which is the weird part. Hang on, I'll just show you her room, right?

SCENE FOUR

Depending on the type of curtain, JAY tries to tug on it until it's pulled up or away. The set that was ALFIE's room has been slightly rearranged to convincingly become a girl's room. Different duvet cover, different posters, and instead of having ALFIE's framed photobooth pictures, there's just a photo of him on her bedside table. JAY, CHRIS and GINGER all step into the room, GINGER sits on the edge of the bed but the other two remain standing.

JAY

It looks a bit like when you see reports of mothers of missing children who've kept their room the same way for like, years, right? Only she's not missing, technically. Just AWOL. Anyway it turned out she'd paid her share of the rent for the year, and she's not using the utilities, so we can't just dump her stuff somewhere. Not that we really want to. What'd be the point, right?

Beat.

ALFIE knocks on the door to the room, and walks in.

ALFIE

I thought you'd be here by now. I like hearing this part.

JAY

You've pretty much missed it. All I have left to say is, I think she'll probably just come and pick it up at the end of the summer when our lease runs out and all this has ended.

ALFIE

That's the part I like. I want her to have to come here. I've stopped missing her now, you know.

All three friends give extremely sarcastic responses, snorts of derision, eyes rolled towards the heavens, and so on.

ALFIE

No, it's true, I think. I don't think we were in love, or anything. I mean, I liked her a lot. I thought we were really, really happy. We hadn't even been going out that long, and we'd only slept together a few times, although for a few weeks we'd been mostly sharing a bed at night.

Beat.

Mostly this bed, actually.

GINGER

Oh, gross.

GINGER makes a mock disgusted face and stands up, but then sits down again and starts inspecting her nails.

ALFIE

But I don't get it. I'm not going to say BUT SHE SEEMED HAPPY because she was fucking down a lot of the time, and you know, stuff. But she was always so nice, and she just fucking left. I can't believe she dropped out. That part still makes me angry.

GINGER

When I spoke to you about maybe dropping out you were really supportive.

ALFIE

Yeah, but you had reasons. You didn't like the course you were doing, you found the city claustrophobic. Why did you stay on, again?

Beat. GINGER looks contemplative, CHRIS looks slightly worried, and opens his mouth as ALFIE starts speaking again. CHRIS decides now is not the time to talk and closes his mouth.

ALFIE

She didn't have any reasons. Or if she did she didn't like, talk about them. Why did she leave all her stuff here? Why are her family so breezy about it? I phoned them up three times, and they were so fucking apologetic, like, *we're sorry Alfred, really, but she's probably just working through some things somewhere a bit quieter. You have to allow her her own space.*

Beat.

I think it's all bullshit. No way does she have enough money to pay rent here and go to Paris, or wherever the fuck it is Jay and people think she's gone. Every week there's a new idea. Try Cambridge. Try London. Try Milton fucking Keynes. She's not there. She's never been *there*.

Beat.

I don't think she has. There are too many roundabouts, not enough else. Why would she go there? What possible reason would she have?

Beat.

No. I think she just went home. I think she was feeling really overwhelmed, or scared or ill. So she's gone home. And you know what? It's been months. I've been home and come back again. I've cut my hair, grown a beard and shaved it again, grown sideburns, shaped them a bit, and I think she's still at home, paling by the window and reading *Pick Me Up* instead of *Doctor Faustus*.

Beat. JAY walks forward, holding a cordless phone.

JAY

Mate, do you want to borrow our phone? ("Free calls past six" can be said if the play is being performed later than six p.m., or "at the weekend" if it's a weekend. Otherwise, JAY is just being generous.)

ALFIE looks at the phone JAY's holding out to him, bites at his thumbnail, then takes it and quickly dials in a number that he doesn't quite want to know by heart. The voice of MOTHER is offstage, and comes through the speakers as he speaks to her on the phone.

ALFIE

Hi, this is, Alfie, it's me. Um, I know I phoned you a while ago, but I was wondering -

MOTHER

Hi Alfie. You're wondering if things have changed since we last spoke?

ALFIE

Yeah.

MOTHER

We have been in touch with the police. It's been a while now, Alfie. They're doing what they can.

ALFIE

Really? I haven't seen anything about an investigation...

MOTHER

It's difficult. If we hear anything, we'll let you know.

Beat.

I wouldn't worry too much. She's always needed her space. That's probably all this is. I told the police that, but just in case...

ALFIE

Um, yeah. I understand. Thanks. I'll let you know if I, hear anything.

MOTHER

Thank you.

Beat.

Beat.

ALFIE visibly gets more uncomfortable as he thinks of something else to say.

ALFIE

Well... I should probably go, I have a lot of work to do.

MOTHER

Yes, I hear it's very busy. Goodbye, Alfie.

ALFIE waits a few seconds before hanging up the phone.

ALFIE

I'm not good at talking to adults. Like, parents. Other people's parents. I don't know if it's a cross-generational thing or not, but I just can't seem to hold a conversation. Or maybe it's just that her parents are fucking mental.

JAY

Isn't that her? Out there?

JAY points, with certainty, out into the audience.

ALFIE

Of course it's not her.

JAY

You're not even looking. It's like you don't want it to be her.

ALFIE

Of course I don't want it to be her. I want a fucking answer, and if she's sitting at the back just watching then she knows that I'm more of a mess than I have any right to be, she hasn't bothered to come and say hi, how are you, I'm sorry I went crazy and I'm sorry, and she's just watching. There isn't an answer really.

ALFIE walks back into the room, sits cross-legged on the ground, and pointedly avoids looking out at the audience. JAY shrugs uncomfortably, and stares into the audience for a bit longer, then goes and joins him. The curtain closes.

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE

The curtain opens to reveal the set and characters pretty much as they were before the pause. GINGER is playing a game on her mobile phone, CHRIS is flicking through a book that he's taken from a shelf and is contemplating 'borrowing', and JAY is sprawled next to ALFIE, who is cross-legged and staring at the point at which his legs cross.

JAY

So she didn't go home then.

CHRIS

Unless her parents were lying.

GINGER

Ugh, did you ever meet her parents? There's no way they were lying. They're all about sharing feelings and truths. Way too open if you ask me.

CHRIS

What?

GINGER

My parents lied to me about pretty much everything. That is, if they had to tell me something. Much better.

CHRIS

Your parents are really nice.

GINGER

Yeah, well, they didn't tell you a different variant on the stork story every time you asked about sex until you were fourteen. And only then because you'd like, seen videos in biology and were practically sleeping with your first boyfriend already.

JAY

Hang on, how is that better than honesty?

GINGER

It's not. But it saves you all the embarrassing moments in which they might want to... share. Her mother bought her a vibrator, you know? It's just going too far.

ALFIE

Oh, God, Ginger. I didn't need to know that.

GINGER

I'm just saying. Maybe it's because of the parents.

Beat.

That she ran away. Look, the vibrator's in here still, I bet.

GINGER opens the underwear drawer and rummages for a second. JAY gets up, very interested, but ALFIE springs up straight after and closes the draw firmly, then leans back on it to stop either of them from trying to investigate further. Both reluctantly sit down. CHRIS looks thoroughly embarrassed throughout.

ALFIE

So if she's not at home then, where? She doesn't have much money, it's difficult to find a job, especially as a university drop-out I expect...

CHRIS

We don't know, Alfie.

ALFIE

Why? I mean, why then? Why at university, why that day? Why me?

GINGER

God, Alfie, make it all about you then.

ALFIE

It is all about me! It fucking is now that she's gone. There's nobody else left in this relationship, is there?

JAY

Mate, I don't think you can just be in a relationship by yourself.

GINGER pushes JAY, who shrugs and looks a bit sheepish, as if he forgot himself.

ALFIE

I want closure, you know? I haven't closed that part of my life here down. And I need to. I need to understand that it's ended. How can that happen without her here? I do miss her. But mostly I just want closure.

JAY

Bullshit.

CHRIS

There's no such thing.

ALFIE

What?

GINGER

Closure, yeah? It's what characters in soaps and sit-coms, American shit, like, yearn for. Why did he stop sleeping with me? Why doesn't he phone me anymore? Why didn't it end properly? You don't get *closure* in real life, whatever the hell it's meant to be. He stopped phoning? He stopped sleeping with you? Guess what! You don't need that explaining. It means what it means. He doesn't want to see you anymore. Just like she doesn't want to see you anymore. She doesn't come with endnotes.

ALFIE

But you can't just know that.

GINGER

I can't pretend to know what the fuck was going through her mind when she left. But it wasn't passive, it wasn't that she stopped phoning you. She made an active decision to leave. The fact that she left everything and not just you, yeah, that means that she probably wasn't just upset with you as much as she couldn't handle everything, and it was probably more to do with her than you. So guess what? You win!

CHRIS

What does he win?

GINGER

The only real reason people want 'closure' or whatever they call it, that you agree doesn't exist, is because they want to know what they did wrong. They want to know if it was something they can fix, like the amount they talk or the size of their breasts, or if it's something they can't, like their horrific political views or their inexplicable obsession with Stephenie Meyer.

ALFIE

Or their awkwardness, or their insecurities, or the fact that they said they didn't like Regina Spektor or Bruce Springsteen as much as the Mamma Mia soundtrack...

JAY

Wait, what?

ALFIE

I was drunk.

CHRIS

You're alive. You weren't drunk enough.

GINGER

Okay, sure, but the point is, Alfie, that none of that matters. I mean maybe a little bit, if you'd liked Springsteen more maybe she'd have bought you *Born to Run* in HMV that day instead of demonstrating clearly how much she felt she identified with the album. Maybe that's all this is, a strange, solitary declaration of love for Bruce Springsteen -

ALFIE

(Interrupting) Wait, you think that might be it?

GINGER

What? Is there something wrong with you? Of course I don't! I think that whatever her reasons, they had very little to do with you. If your boyfriend pisses you off, you tell him, or just dump him. You don't piss right off in return.

CHRIS

Yeah. They just tell you it's not working out.

GINGER

They don't just leave. You ever listened to *Born to Run*, Alfie?

ALFIE *shrugs.*

GINGER

(Sings) Together we could break this trap / We'll run till we drop, baby we'll never go back

JAY

I don't get it.

GINGER

It's about running away *with* the one you love. She loved Springsteen all right, but she wasn't thinking about him. She didn't want to go away with you, Alfie. She wanted to get away from everything. She's managed to find a place to hide.

ALFIE

I'm confused. What does Springsteen have to do with her leaving having nothing to do with me?

CHRIS

I don't know. But what I do know is... if she was here now, if she told you exactly why, would it actually help? If it did have something to do with you, with something you can't help because it's in the past, something you can't or don't want to change, will that help you improve in any meaningful way? No. I mean, it shouldn't. Do you want her opinion anyway? She just left. She left us all.

JAY

Normally when I break up with people, girls or boys, we end up chucking stuff across rooms at each other.

CHRIS

But, Alfie, she didn't touch your stuff at all. She just stopped touching anything. Ground. Walls. Life. Our lives.

ALFIE

Well, I don't think she's dead.

CHRIS

No. But it doesn't seem like she's alive. Not to us. She's far removed from us all now.

ALFIE

It's not up to you to decide how alive people seem. Life isn't a matter of opinion. This sounds like philosophy or something, but it's not. She's probably just another person out there that we're not in contact with. No big deal, if you think about it.

GINGER

You know that feeling you get when you really like someone, as a friend or more, and you think about how much you want to stay friends with them for the rest of time, and can't imagine not being friends with them. You usually don't stay like that, and it doesn't even feel weird.

Beat.

She didn't even allow that to happen like it normally does.

CHRIS

I don't usually get that. I didn't get it with her either.

Beat.

Do you think this is healthy?

CHRIS *looks out at the audience for a minute. He is unwavering.*

SCENE TWO

As ALFIE starts to talk, the rest of the cast leave the stage. The curtain comes down behind him.

ALFIE

I keep going to her favourite places. Or places we just used to go. I don't expect to see her there, it just lets me think. Or not think.

Beat.

Ginger once said that it was like I wanted to mourn, but couldn't quite, and so keep dragging it out forever.

Beat.

This is a fucking exhibitionist wake.

ALFIE unzips his backpack again and takes out what looks like some rolled-up A3 posters, as well as a bag of sweets (nothing too expensive; preferably the actor's choice). He eats a sweet and offers one to somebody near him in the audience, then puts them away again. He holds the posters slightly sheepishly.

I can't take you to her favourite places, not easily, it'd be like a ghost tour...

Beat.

but I blew up some photos to show you.

ALFIE unrolls the first photo and holds it in front of his chest. It should be a photo of a bridge, an impressive one - the Bristol Clifton suspension bridge, or Tower Bridge, or something similar.

Some of the girls I know from back home used to be scared of bridges. I don't know if they are now, but she liked bridges. She used to use a photo of this instead of a photo of her on websites and profiles and things. We (*if the bridge is pedestrian, he says 'walked', otherwise 'drove'*) across it once. I don't know why.

ALFIE looks down at it, then rolls it up again and unrolls the next photo. He holds it the same way. It is a cafe.

I don't think this is interesting for you. We used to drink green tea and milky coffee here. She said it was cheap, but I think cheap for her had a different meaning than it did for me. Look -

ALFIE points to a girl in the photo. She should only be seen from behind, or blurred, or be somehow obscured.

That's not her, but sometimes I think it might be. I didn't take this photo.

ALFIE rolls the photo up and then scratches the back of his neck and looks up at the ceiling.

I keep drinking green tea and hoping it'll stop tasting like death to me and will suddenly become what it was to her. I don't even know why she liked it. I'm trying to help you build up a picture of her, see, so that if you see her you can recognise something in her, but the thing is, I only have a small imprint of her left now, and it was only ever half-formed. We talked about books and things.

GINGER walks on and picks the photos up.

GINGER

They'd have more of a chance of recognising her if you just showed them a photograph of her.

ALFIE

I can't do that. What if somebody does? What if nobody does? It won't make any difference. I don't want to flatten her out like that.

GINGER

Or is it just that you deleted them all and won't even look at any that we have left.

ALFIE

It's easier like that.

GINGER

If you're thinking that'll help you forget her then what the hell is all this? It's like a mausoleum. To somebody that as far as these people are concerned definitely doesn't even exist except behind these photos and inside your backpack. Let's take another look at your room. What you've kept.

The curtain comes back down on Alfie's room. It's as it was before. GINGER starts going through his drawers and pulling out small objects which she holds up. The first is a small candle.

A candle. A candle, Alfie! You're too scared of matches to even light birthday cakes.

The second is a cheap bead necklace.

I doubt you even noticed her wearing this. Not that she wore it much.

The third is a diary.

Did you even go through this, or are you too scared?

ALFIE

That's mine.

GINGER

Oh. Well, the point stands.

ALFIE

She left those things here. What was I supposed to do with them?

GINGER

Burn it.

Beat.

Burn it all.

ALFIE

You're ridiculous. They're tiny. You weren't even meant to show them that stuff.

GINGER

Yeah I was. Come on, I want a cigarette.

ALFIE and GINGER both leave the stage. GINGER is still holding the candle. The necklace is left on his bed.

SCENE THREE

JAY and CHRIS are both onstage. JAY is sitting on Alfie's bed, fiddling with his alarm clock. CHRIS is lying back on the floor with his head facing directly upwards.

JAY

Do you think she's just, like, dead?

CHRIS

Jay.

JAY

No, come on. She's been gone for ages. I find it so weird that the police didn't even give a shit.

CHRIS

I guess it didn't seem that suspicious. I think she's on a database now though. I'm not sure how it works, I think her parents are the ones who're actually involved with that whole thing. Alfie doesn't really talk about it. He thinks about how it affects him, you know. Not the logistics.

JAY

I don't understand why they're not going apeshit. Why they're not searching everywhere. Nobody's seen her, nobody's even asked around to find out if she was leading a double life and some crime lord went all Godfather on her.

CHRIS

That's because she wasn't. She didn't have any massive gaps of time unaccounted for. Not even small ones. That'd be simple, you'd just find out who she was involved with and why and from there you could probably deduce what happened.

JAY

Mate, you watch The Bill way too much.

CHRIS

It's not like The Godfather, it's not like The Bill, and it's not even like Reggie Perrin.

JAY

But Alfie's going fucking crazy over all this, philosophising about it, printing photos of her favourite places, telling anybody who'll listen, this whole thing. And she could have just gone off somewhere and died. We wouldn't know.

CHRIS

I don't think we'd want to know. They say it's better to know. But right now it's kind of like, the cat in the box that might have killed it.

JAY

Schrödinger's cat.

CHRIS

Yeah.

JAY

I like cats.

CHRIS

I didn't even like her that much, but I feel she's become some whole other entity now. And I want both of those entities to be alive. Even if I can't tell if they are or not.

GINGER and ALFIE come back onstage. GINGER's holding the candle still and is lighting it with a heavy metal cigarette lighter. ALFIE looks anxious as he follows her.

ALFIE

Can't you just leave it? I was keeping that.

GINGER

It's meant to smell like vanilla. I think they always just smell like candles.

JAY

I dunno, her room always smelled kind of, vanilla. More than wax.

CHRIS

Where'd you go?

GINGER

Outside. I thought Alfie could do with some (*depending on the time of year and the temperature/weather outside the theatre, she says 'cold', 'wind', 'rain' or 'hot air'*)

ALFIE

Just give me the candle back. Come on. It's not like it's unreasonable for me to want it. It's only small.

JAY realises at some point about now that the necklace is on the bed next to him, and starts fiddling with it. He counts the beads like prayer-beads.

I didn't even want to show it. Or light it. Please, Ginger. We're not allowed fire in these rooms anyway. The alarm will go off.

CHRIS

The alarms never go off.

JAY

I set an alarm off with an aerosol once. In Amsterdam. Youth Hostel...

ALFIE *snatches the candle from GINGER and blows out the flame. He holds it in the palm of his hand for a second then shoves it back in the drawer with his diary.*

CHRIS

What, did you set it on fire?

JAY

Nah, they're just really sensitive. I think it's just so that if you smoke weed in your room they'll definitely catch you. They ended up just assuming that like, every alarm was from an aerosol though. Especially if you sprayed air freshener to cover up the smell of the weed.

CHRIS

I can't believe you bought air freshener. In Amsterdam.

JAY

We were high then too.

ALFIE

Please. Stop for a minute.

CHRIS

Oh sorry, did we stray from the topic at hand?

ALFIE *is visibly upset.*

I know we say this a lot, Alfie. But it's been six months. Every day isn't her funeral.

ALFIE

I know it's not. Don't be stupid. But I'm trying to do this thing, and it feels bigger than me now. It's like...

ALFIE *takes the last photo from his bag, unrolls it and holds it up as he did the others. It's a dense forest. It should look in some way magical, or like it belongs in a fairytale.*

I've never been here, but she had. She took this photo and showed it to me, and it's amazing. I don't even know where it is. We talked about Enid Blyton books, about being children. There's an enchanted wood, a never-ending magical tree... The children eat these toffees that swell to fill their mouths until nothing else can fit, until they can't salivate or chew or speak, and then, just when it gets unbearable...

JAY

Pop.

ALFIE

It's like this whole thing, missing her, got bigger than me. I'm small, you know. I'm small and kind of shy, actually, but this wouldn't let me be like that. I want to shout about it until it becomes unbearable and because maybe then it'll go, pop, and everything's gone. It must get better at some point. It can't just split me apart. She's gone. The sweets only left the taste behind.

CHRIS

I don't think that's a great way of talking about her.

GINGER

I think he's talking about his feelings.

JAY

Those toffees sound fucking amazing. I love toffee. I think I read those books. The children can talk to the trees to find out their secrets by pressing their ears to them, right? They can find out what nobody else knows. If only you had your own tree.

ALFIE

If only I lived in an Enid Blyton book. Except that'd be shit too.

CHRIS

I think those toffees sound horrible. Toffees are too much for me as it is.

JAY

Don't you prefer children's books to the books that grown ups are meant to like? I mean, children's books from like, the old days. Enid Blyton, E. Nesbit, Lewis Carroll...

CHRIS

Narnia was good.

GINGER

Narnia was awful. They all die at the end, don't they?

ALFIE

When you get too old for children's books they make you read books written for teenagers about issues and death, though. It's not like they let it last for very long. We used to talk about that sort of thing.

ALFIE realises he is still holding the photo. He gingerly rolls it up and put it back with the other two.

JAY

Maybe she's just gone to the forest. She's been there before. Nothing bad happens in the forest!

ALFIE

She might as well have. I doubt it though. She figured if she went back it'd never be as good as the first time.

GINGER

I hate when people say shit like that. I'd rather go to a place I liked once over and over until I'm sick of it. Then I can find somewhere else. There are too few nice places, you know?

CHRIS

There's a lot of them.

GINGER

Yeah, but I'm lucky if I find a handful.

ALFIE

I think it's full of poisonous things, she almost got bitten last time. So maybe that's why she didn't want to go back.

Beat.

GINGER

He should have handed out self-addressed postcards so people could tell him if they've seen her anywhere. Just her, running away from here. They could draw a map. X marks somewhere we won't find her. Or maybe we will. That'd really knock us over.

ALFIE

I feel like the more I try and expose myself the less of either of us we see. I say that it's bigger than me now, but it's not bigger than them.

ALFIE waves a hand at the audience, and avoids their eyes.

I don't think I can get past it.

JAY

What, the wall?

GINGER

What wall? Are you broken?

ALFIE

The fact that they don't know her. And we did.

CHRIS

It's been six months.

ALFIE

I know. It feels like it. But it's like, to make up for her not being here, this whole thing just expands. Like if it gets large enough it'll finally disappear, or maybe it'll catch her, snag her on its sleeve, or just get so big that she can't avoid its gravitational pull any longer.

CHRIS

You don't really think that. You don't really think she might come back, do you? You're not just waiting until she does?

ALFIE

You don't know.

CHRIS

How would she even hear about this? She's off the map now.

ALFIE

Not entirely. Nobody is.

ALFIE pauses a second, then attempts to get six members of the audience nearby to hold hands with each other and create a chain.

(Indicating the person at one end of the chain) So if this is me, then these people (indicates the middle four) are the people that will pass this on. And at the end is her (indicates the last person in the chain, the furthest away).

CHRIS

You're assuming that people are going to want to talk about this.

ALFIE

Won't they?

JAY

Mate, you haven't even told them her name.

CHRIS

It doesn't matter if she's connected to you by any sort of chain, short, or long. I still think she could be out there (*indicates the audience*), or she could be miles away, or she could be dead. She's gone.

ALFIE

You don't need to tell me that!

GINGER

You might not even recognise her. These people certainly won't. You've avoided even acknowledging the physical memory of her, so carefully just tried to reconstruct her debris and inner life instead that all we can see is what she left behind. You haven't helped anyone see her, just what she didn't want to be anymore.

JAY

I don't even care about this stuff. I don't understand what you're doing but if it helps then go for it.

ALFIE

Thanks.

JAY

But all I can think about is where she's gone. Nobody knows at all. You say not Paris, not Milton Keynes. Why not? She might as well be everywhere else, because we're not there, and we're not going to go searching for her. Well, I don't think we are. I'm not coming, I have other stuff.

Beat.

There's no point in searching because she didn't leave a trail. She didn't send you a postcard, or leave you a note, or anything like that.

Beat.

Everything indicates that she doesn't want to be found. She doesn't want to be reached. If she doesn't want it then it just won't happen.

GINGER

The world's so big, and she's small enough to just vanish.

ALFIE

But what if she was in trouble and didn't want to just disappear? Didn't want to do this?

CHRIS

Next you'll be saying that maybe she's a secret agent.

GINGER

If she was in trouble, this much trouble, then you won't reach her by appealing to people. You won't find her by sending her very large, indirect messages, yeah? Since when did that ever work. No matter how direct you try to make this whole thing, if she's in trouble then she can't come back.

CHRIS

She'd be a terrible secret agent.

ALFIE

Why?

CHRIS

Look how much you care. You must have been very involved.

GINGER

(Notices the necklace in Jay's hand) Did you ever see her wear that?

JAY

Nah, I never really notice. I just found it on the bed.

GINGER

I didn't see her wear jewellery much.

GINGER takes the necklace from JAY, unhooks it, and tries to put it on. She's not very good at doing it. JAY helps her and finally she's wearing it.

CHRIS

I don't like that. Please just take it off.

GINGER shrugs and adjusts it, then takes it off and hands it to Chris.

GINGER

It's weird that we all say that she's so small and the world's so big that we won't find her, but we find small things all the time. Alfie found this necklace, a candle, a bitten pen lid that he uses instead of his own. I saw an old photo of a girl I used to know in a French magazine last month, sulking at the camera of some photographer. I met a guy from Cornwall once who just knew a couple of guys from Whitby... they were some twins I grew up with and used to know like that.

GINGER *laces her fingers with Chris's and pulls on his hand slightly.*

I don't know them anymore, not really, but he kind of gave them back to me by describing them, like pebbles he'd managed to catch on a beach after I'd let them slide back towards the sea.

CHRIS

(Loosening his fingers) Profound.

GINGER

I just mean that we're not saying that Alfie will never find her again. He probably won't. You can't just expect or wish for this kind of stuff to happen, because it doesn't work like that. People walk so many different ways. You don't expect them to. You think it's all linear, but people walk sideways -

JAY

Like crabs.

GINGER

Thanks, dickhead. People spiral away from us and end up in the ocean, or married with three children, walk diagonally and end up praying three hours a day under high roofs and canopies.

ALFIE

If she's married then something's gone terribly wrong.

GINGER

My point is, she's somewhere now that you can't understand. Somewhere you can't work out from a phone book, or google, no matter how many alerts you receive, because she's just waltzed away from you. The only way you'll ever find her is by chance.

CHRIS

And you can't plan for that.

GINGER

They say that finding somebody for the first time is like finding one in a million. That's bullshit.

JAY

Most of the time.

GINGER

All of the time. It's finding the same person again, when they don't want to be found, that's got odds like that. More than that, even. Because it's a specific person that you set out to find. And it's not her -

GINGER *points to an audience member.*

CHRIS

It's not her.

CHRIS *points to a different audience member.*

JAY

I don't even think it's her.

JAY *points to somebody at the back.*

GINGER

Alfie, you're listening, yeah?

ALFIE

I guess.

GINGER

You can't plan for this. You can't like, expect it to happen. Because the people you end up reconnecting with probably aren't the people you want to.

CHRIS

I don't think you should have even started talking about this. Alfie, you shouldn't even be hoping for this.

JAY

Don't search for her like this. It's like looking into a shadow. It's like opening a door to nothing. Just a room with no light on and no movement, and there's nobody else in the house.

GINGER

What?

JAY

Well, I get scared by that sometimes. When I'm tired. I open the wrong door.

GINGER

You just need to keep moving. Walk in a big trapezium or a rhododendron for all I care, but this is just you bouncing in the same place, trying to get higher and bigger and not managing it, ever. Start fucking walking.

ALFIE

(Looking at the rolled up photos) I'm going to stick these on my walls. Maybe I will go to this forest.

JAY

I always forget how infuriating this is. We can't just keep telling him this stuff.

GINGER

I'm saying it more for me by now, Jay. I feel like I'm constantly hitting my heels on my French textbooks and my crumpled double mattress, and my head is never going to break through that skylight built of sugar and spiderwebs here. But I like it here. I know it here.

ALFIE

Amen.

CHRIS

Your bedroom smells like hers now.

ALFIE

I know. Ginger, you can say that shit all you want, clearly you thought it out. But like, there are two outcomes of all this, one more likely than the other, and so all this shit doesn't matter. If I bump into her by chance, I just do, and this won't make that less likely. So I'm going to end this now, because I've done all I can without driving myself any crazier than I've had to, any more than's worth it.

Beat.

JAY

You just hope it works.

Beat.

And if not, we'll have to just deal with not knowing where she is. Sometimes I used to think about like, running away. But I wouldn't be able to do it. It must be so weird. So difficult, and it's not like there's any reward.

Beat.

I think something must have just, snapped. But what do I know?

GINGER *shrugs, pulls at her sleeves, then walks out of the room.*

CHRIS

It's weird. She was quite loud. You always heard her leaving.

CHRIS *notices that GINGER's left and follows her out.*

JAY

Nah, not always. Just like, when she was saying bye.

ALFIE

Not always.

JAY and ALFIE look at each other for a second, then look out into the audience. ALFIE keeps breaking contact and staring at his shoes, JAY is unwavering. After about twenty seconds ALFIE sits on his bed and flicks the radio on to the same station it was on before. JAY starts looking through ALFIE's backpack, and picks up the book he was reading before. Offstage, GINGER is heard shouting 'WELL I'M TURNING THE HEATING BACK ON AND YOU HAVE TO FUCKING DEAL WITH IT.'

*Fade to black. The radio is left on for a few seconds.
End.*