

FEMALE CHARACTER MONOLOGUES

1. A DAY IN THE DEATH OF JOE EGG by Peter Nicholls -

PAM

Oh, charming. It wasn't my idea coming back here in the first place. But once Freddie's set eyes on a lame dog, you might as well talk to the moon. I keep looking at the door and thinking she's going to come through it any moment with that poor weirdie. I know it's awful but it's one of my- you know- THINGS. We're none of us perfect... I can't stand anything N.P.A. Non-Physically Attractive. Old women in bathing-suits - and skin diseases - and cripples... ; Rowton House-looking men who spit and have hair growing out of their ears... No good, I just can't look at them. I know Freddie's right about Hitler and of course that's horrid. Still, I can't help sympathizing with Brian, can you? I don't mean the way he described. I think it should be done by the state. And so should charity. Then we might have an end of all those hideous dolls in shop-doorways with irons on their legs.... Freddie won't hear of it, of course. But then he loves a lame dog. Every year he buys so many tickets for the spastic raffle he wins the TV set and every year he gives it to an old folks' home. He used to try taking me along on his visits but I said it wasn't me at all and he gave up. One-place-we went, there were these poor freaks with-oh, you know-enormous heads and so on-and you just feel: oh, put them out of their misery. Well, they wouldn't have survived in nature, it's only modern medicine, so modern medicine should be allowed to do away with them. A committee of doctors and do-gooders, naturally, to make sure there's no funny business and then-if I say gas-chamber that makes it sound horrid - but I do mean put to sleep. When Freddie gets all mealy-mouthed about it, I say, look, darling, if one of our kids was dying and they had a cure and you knew it had been discovered in the Nazi laboratories, would you refuse to let them use it? I certainly wouldn't. I love my own immediate family and that's the lot. Can't manage any more. I want to go home and see them again. They may not be the most hard-working well behaved geniuses on earth, but no one in their right mind could say they were N.P.A. Freddie, I'm going. You can get a taxi and...

2. A TALK IN THE PARK (CONFUSIONS) by Alan Ayckbourn -

BERYL

Thanks. Sorry, only the man over there won't stop talking. I wanted to read this in peace. I couldn't concentrate. He just kept going on and on about his collections or something. I normally don't mind too much, only if you get a letter like this, you need all your concentration. You can't have people talking in your ear – especially when you're trying to decipher writing like this. He must have been stoned out of his mind when he wrote it. It wouldn't be unusual. Look at it. He wants me to come back. Some hopes. To him. He's sorry, he didn't mean to do what he did, he won't do it again I promise, etc., etc. I seem to have heard that before. It's not the first time, I can tell you. And there's no excuse for it, is there? Violence. I mean, what am I supposed to do? Keep going back to that? Every time he loses his temper he ... I mean, there's no excuse. A fracture, you know. It was nearly a compound fracture. That's what they told me. (indicating her head) Right here. You can practically see it to this day. Two X-rays. I said to him when I got home, I said, "You bastard, you know what you did to my head?" He just stands there. The way he does. "Sorry," he says, "I'm ever so sorry." I told him, I said, "You're a bastard, that's what you are. A right, uncontrolled, violent, bad-tempered bastard." You know what he said? He says, "You call me a bastard again and I'll smash your stupid face in".

3. ROAD by Jim Cartwright –

VALERIE

I'm fed up of sitting here waiting for him, he'll be another hundred years at his rate. What a life, get up, feed every baby in the house. Do everything else I can, without cash. While he drinks, drinks it, drinks it, and shoves nothing my way except his fat hard hands in bed at night. Rough dog he is. Big rough heavy dog. Dog with sick in its fur. He has me pulling my hair out. Look at my hair, it's so dry. So sadly dried. I'd cry but I don't think tears would come. And there's nothing worse than an empty cry. It's like choking. Why do we do it? Why do I stay? Why the why why? You can cover yourself in questions and you're none the wiser 'cause you're too tired to answer. Always scrimping and scraping. He just takes the Giro and does what he wants with it. Leaves a few pounds on the table corner sometimes, sometimes. But you never know when and if you ask him he chops you one. That's why I have to borrow, borrow off everyone. I am like a bony rat going here, going there, trying to sniffle something out. They help me, though I'll bet you they hate me really. Despise me really. Because I'm always there an' keep asking, asking and they can't say no. They just open their purses, and I says, thank you, thank you a thousand times till we all feel sick. God I can't wait till the kids are older then I can send them. He'll come in soon. Pissed drunk through. Telling me I should do more about the place. Eating whatever's in the house. Pissing and missing the bog. Squeezing the kids too hard. Shouting then sulking. Then sleeping all deep and smelly, wrapped over and over in the blankets. Drink's a bastard. Drink's a swilly brown bastard. A smelling stench sea. And he's the captain with his bristles wet through. Swallowing and throwing, swallowing and throwing white brown water all over me. Oh what am I saying, it's a nightmare all this. I blame him then I don't blame him. It's not his fault there's no work. He's such a big man, he's nowhere to put himself. He looks so awkward and sad at the sink, the vacuum's like a toy in his hand. When he's in all day he fills up the room. Like a big wounded animal, moving about, trying to find his slippers, clumsy with the small things of the house, bewildered. I see this. I see the poor beast in the wrong world. I see his eyes sad and low. I see him as the days go on, old damp sacks one on top of another. I see him, the waste. The human waste of the land. But I can't forgive him. I can't forgive the cruel of the big fucking heap. The big fucking clumsy heap. (She startles herself with what she's saying, nearly cries.) He's so big and hunched and ugly. (Holding back.) Oh my man. (She chokes.) I hate him now, and I didn't used to. I hate him now, and I don't want to. (She cries.) Can we not have before again, can we not? (She cries.) Can we not have before again? (She looks out manic and abrupt.) Can we not?

4. THE CAUCASIAN CHALK CIRCLE by Bertolt Brecht -

GRUSHA

Even if it was thirty, I'd tell you what I think of your justice, you drunken onion! (Incoherently) How dare you talk to me like the cracked Isaiah on the church window? As if you were somebody? For you weren't born to this. You weren't born to rap your own mother on the knuckles if she swipes a little bowl of salt someplace. Aren't you ashamed of yourself when you see how I tremble before you? You're made yourself their servant so no one will take their houses from them – houses they had stolen! Since when have houses belonged to the bedbugs? But you're on the watch, or they couldn't drag our men into their wars! You bribetaker! I've no respect for you. No more than for a thief or a bandit with a knife! You can do what you want. You can take the child away from me, a hundred against one, but I tell you one thing: only extortioners should be chosen for a profession like yours, and men who rape children! As punishment! Yes, let them sit in judgement on their fellow creatures. It is worse than to hang from the gallows.

5. CRAVE by Sarah Kane -

A

And I want to play hide-and-seek and give you my clothes and tell you I like your shoes and sit on the steps while you take a bath and massage your neck and kiss your feet and hold your hand and go for a meal and not mind when you eat my food and meet you at Rudy's and talk about the day and type up your letters and carry your boxes and laugh at your paranoia and give you tapes you don't listen to and watch great films and watch terrible films and complain about the radio and take pictures of you when you're sleeping and get up to fetch you coffee and bagels and Danish and go to Florence and drink coffee at midnight and have you steal my cigarettes and never be able to find a match and tell you about the tv programme I saw the night before and take you to the eye hospital and not laugh at your jokes and want you in the morning but let you sleep for a while and kiss your back and stroke your skin and tell you how much I love your hair your eyes your lips your neck your breasts your arse your and sit on the steps smoking till your neighbour comes home and sit on the steps smoking till you come home and worry when you're late and be amazed when you're early and give you sunflowers and go to your party and dance till I'm black and be sorry when I'm wrong and happy when you forgive me and look at your photos and wish I'd known you forever and hear your voice in my ear and feel your skin on my skin and get scared when you're angry and tell you you're gorgeous and hug you when you're anxious and hold you when you hurt and want you when I smell you and offend you when I touch you and whimper when I'm next to you and whimper when I'm not and smother you in the night and get cold when you take the blanket and hot when you don't and melt when you smile and dissolve when you laugh and have a feeling so deep I can't find words for it and want to buy you a kitten I'd get jealous of because it would get more attention than me and keep you in bed when you have to go and cry like a baby when you finally do and get rid of the roaches and buy you presents you don't want and take them away again and ask you to marry me and you say no again but keep on asking because though you think I don't mean it I do always have from the first time I asked you and wander the city thinking it's empty without you and want want you want and think I'm losing myself but know I'm safe with you and tell you the worst of me and think it's all over but hang on in for just ten more minutes before you throw me out of your life and forget who I am and try to get closer to you and make love with you at three in the morning and somehow somehow somehow communicate some of the overwhelming undying overpowering unconditional all-encompassing heart-enriching mind-expanding on-going never-ending love I have for you.

6. AFTER THE END by Dennis Kelly -

LOUISE

I think a lot about what makes people do things. What makes us behave in certain ways, you know. Every night I been thinking about this. Trapped in whatever, behaviour, cycles of violence or something and is it possible to break, these cycles, is it possible to break... And I'd be sitting there thinking about this and this cat, this gorgeous cat with no tail would come to my door, I'd have the back door open because the garden looks, and she'd be terrified at first, it looks beautiful it really does. So I bought some food for her and the first time she just sniffed at it and ran away, the moment I moved, you know, no sign of her for the rest of the night, and I'm thinking reactions and responses, patterns, violence breeding violence, and the next night she's in a bit further and I'm looking at her tail thinking 'that's been cut off' and I don't think it was, I think she's a Manx, I think they're born without tails, and the next night she's further in and I'm beginning to look forward to it. And the next night she's in and she's eating and from then on she's in every night; she's on my lap, she's following me around, she's waiting on the window ledge for me when I get home. And we sit there every night and I'm thinking behaviour and patterns or whatever and she's eating and meowing to be let in. Every night. And one night she scratches me, out of the blue, cats, you know, just a vindictive cat-scratch, look: see? Just here.

She knew she'd done wrong.

Took her three night to get back into my lap. And I'm stroking her and thinking. Warm, delicate, you know. And I put my hands around her neck. And I squeeze, and I squeeze until her neck is about the thickness of a

rope and still I squeeze. And I'm sitting there - And this is last night - with this dead cat in my lap. And I thought I'd come in and see you.
And here I am.

**7. AGAMEMNON (THE ORESTEIA) by Aeschylus -
CLYTEMNESTRA**

What words I said before suited necessity;
without the slightest shame, I now unsay them all.
Under a tender guise my hate matched his manly hate.
The trap I set for his ruin was too high to vault.
For my own part the conflict born of an ancient grudge
has been pondered long and deep.
What I planned to do, has now been done.
Here I stand where I struck him down.
He could not escape the stroke of death, nor beat it aside.
Like a fisherman casting his tightly woven net,
I snared him in a mesh of deadly crimson cloth.
I struck him twice. Twice he cried and fell to his knees.
Once down I delivered the third and final blow,
in thanksgiving to Hades, lord of the underworld,
guardian of the dead.
So he fell, his life throbbled away;
Breath and blood spurting out of him like a shower,
spattering me like drops of crimson dew.
I soaked it up joyfully as spring buds do the gods' sweet rain.
It is over and done, these are the facts.
It if pleases you, noble elders of Argos, be glad.
But for me — I am triumphant.
The dead deserve libations, the sacrament of religion.
Agamemnon has the just deserts of death.
He filled our cup with such an evil brew,
he himself now come home and drunk it to the dregs.

**8. AGNES OF GOD by John Pielmeier -
AGNES**

I'm tired of talking! I've been talking for weeks! And nobody believes me when I tell them anything!
Nobody listens to me! ... Where do you think babies come from? ... Well, I think they come from when
an angel lights on their mother's chest and whispers into her ear. That makes good babies start to grow.

Bad babies come from when a fallen angel squeezes in down there, and they grow and grow until they come out down there. I don't know where good babies come out. (Silence) And you can't tell the difference except that bad babies cry a lot and make their fathers go away and their mothers get very ill and die sometimes. Mummy wasn't very happy when she died and I think she went to hell because every time I see her she looks like she just stepped out of a hot shower. And I'm never sure if it's her or the Lady who tells me things. They fight over me all the time. The Lady I saw when I was ten. I was lying on the grass looking at the sun and the sun became a cloud and the cloud became the Lady, and she told me she would talk to me and then her feet began to bleed and I saw there were holes in her hands and in her side and I tried to catch the blood as it fell from the sky but I couldn't see any more because my eyes hurt because there were big black spots in front of them. And she tells me things like – right now she's crying 'Marie! Marie!' but I don't know what that means. And she uses me to sing. It's as if she's throwing a big hook through the air and it catches me under my ribs and tries to pull me up but I can't move because Mummy is holding my feet and all I can do is sing in her voice, it's the Lady's voice, God loves you! (Silence) God loves you. (Silence) ... I don't want to talk anymore, all right? I just want to go home.

9. ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL (ACT 1, SCENE 3) by William Shakespeare -

HELENA

Then, I confess,
 Here on my knee, before high heaven and you,
 That before you, and next unto high heaven,
 I love your son.
 My friends were poor, but honest; so's my love:
 Be not offended; for it hurts not him
 That he is loved of me: I follow him not
 By any token of presumptuous suit;
 Nor would I have him till I do deserve him;
 Yet never know how that desert should be.
 I know I love in vain, strive against hope;
 Yet in this captious and intenable sieve
 I still pour in the waters of my love
 And lack not to lose still: thus, Indian-like,
 Religious in mine error, I adore
 The sun, that looks upon his worshipper,
 But knows of him no more. My dearest madam,
 Let not your hate encounter with my love
 For loving where you do: but if yourself,
 Whose aged honour cites a virtuous youth,
 Did ever in so true a flame of liking
 Wish chastely and love dearly, that your Dian
 Was both herself and love: O, then, give pity
 To her, whose state is such that cannot choose
 But lend and give where she is sure to lose;
 That seeks not to find that her search implies,
 But riddle-like lives sweetly where she dies!

10. DANCING AT LUGHNASA (ACT 1) by Brian Friel -

MAGGIE

When I was sixteen I remember slipping out one Sunday night – it was this time of year, the beginning of August – and Bernie and I met at the gate of the workhouse and the pair of us went off to a dance in

Ardstraw. I was being pestered by a fellow called Tim Carlin at the time but it was really Brian McGuinness that I was – that I was keen on. Remember Brian with the white hands and the longest eyelashes you ever saw? But of course he was crazy about Bernie. Anyhow the two boys took us on the bar of their bikes and off the four of us headed to Ardstraw, fifteen miles each way. If Daddy had known, may he rest in peace . . . And at the end of the night there was a competition for the Best Military Two-step. And it was down to three couples: the local pair from Ardstraw; wee Timmy and myself – he was up to there on me; and Brian and Bernie . . . And they were just so beautiful together, so stylish; you couldn't take your eyes off them. People just stopped dancing and gazed at them . . . And when the judges announced the winners – they were probably blind drunk – naturally the local couple came first; and Timmy and myself came second; and Brian and Bernie came third. Poor Bernie was stunned. She couldn't believe it. Couldn't talk. Wouldn't speak to any of us for the rest of the night. Wouldn't even cycle home with us. She was right, too: they should have won; they were just so beautiful together . . . And that's the last time I saw Brian McGuinness – remember Brian with the . . .? And the next thing I heard he had left for Australia . . . She was right to be angry, Bernie. I know it wasn't fair – it wasn't fair at all. I mean they must have been blind drunk, those judges, whoever they were . . .

11. EDUCATING RITA by Willy Russell -

RITA

But I don't wanna be charming and delightful: funny. What's funny? I don't wanna be funny. I wanna talk seriously with the rest of you, I don't wanna spend the night takin' the piss, comin' on with the funnies because that's the only way I can get into the conversation. I didn't want to come to your house just to play the court jester.

But I don't want to be myself. Me? What's me? Some stupid woman who gives us all a laugh because she thinks she can learn, because she thinks one day she'll be like the rest of them, talking seriously, confidently, with knowledge, livin' a civilised life. Well, she can't be like that really but bring her in because she's good for a laugh!

I'm all right with you, here in this room; but when I saw those people you were with I couldn't come in. I would have seized up. Because I'm a freak. I can't talk to the people I live with anymore. An' I can't talk to the likes of them on Saturday, or them out there, because I can't learn the language. I'm a half- caste. I went back to the pub where Denny was, an' me mother, an' our Sandra, an' her mates. I'd decided I was n't comin' here again. I went into the pub an' they were singin', all of them singin' some song they'd learnt from the juke- box. An' I stood in that pub an' thought, just what the frig am I trying to do? Why don't I just pack it in an' stay with them, an' join in the singin'?

(Angrily) You think I can, don't you? Just because you pass a pub doorway an' hear the singin' you think we're all O.K., that we're all survivin', with the spirit intact. Well I did join in with the singin', I didn't ask any questions, I just went along with it. But when I looked round me mother had stopped singin', an' she was cryin', but no one could get it out of her why she was cryin'. Everyone just said she was pissed an' we should get her home. So we did, an' on the way home I asked her why. I said, 'Why are y' cryin', Mother?' She said, 'Because- because we could sing better songs than those.' Ten minutes later Denny had her laughing and singing again, pretending she hadn't said it. But she had. And that's why I came back. And that's why I'm staying.

12. JERUSALEM (ACT 2, SCENE 6) by Michael Gurr -

NINA

And what is this idea? That everyone gets the disease they deserve? Yes, I am interested in it. And I'm particularly interested in the fact that you never hear if from the parents of a child born with its brain hanging out of its head. Karma? What does around comes around? There's something very nasty hiding in the idea of karma. It's another way of not thinking. People get what they deserve? Sounds like the Liberal Party with a joint in its mouth. (Beat) I bad deeds are accounted for? Really? In my experience there are great numbers of very bad people leading very happy lives. It's a pretty false comfort, wouldn't you say, tho think they'll all get a spank in Hell. To think they'll all come back as a piece of dogshit. (Beat) Surely the

point is what we do now? Who we become, how we behave? To leave all the judgement up to God or the karmic compost – that’s terrible impotence isn’t it? Adults, grown men and women, with a dummy in the mouth. And look closely at this, Malcolm, look at the people who glue themselves to these ideas. For the happy and healthy these ideas are a way of feeling smug. Fifty cents in the poorbox and the knowledge that the poor will always be with us. And those who actually suffer? What are they saying? I am suffering because God wants me to? I think those American slave songs, so uplifting, and I want to be sick. In my training they take you around the wards. There was a woman, both breasts long gone into the hospital incinerator. She tried to hold my gaze while the sutures were taken out. Until the hospital chaplain came sliding across the lino. And her pale fierce eyes slid him right back through the curtain. (Beat) You see I don’t believe that justice is something you light a candle for. It’s just the way you behave. (Beat) But that’s me. Will you tell Vivien I called in? Malcolm, I’ve enjoyed our little talk. (She extends her hand).

13. SAINT JOAN by George Bernard Shaw -

JOAN

Give me that writing.

(She rushes to the table; snatches up the paper and tears it into fragments)

Light your fire: do you think I dread it as much as the life of a rat in a hole? My voices were right!...

Yes: they told me you were fools and that I was not to listen to your fine words nor trust to your charity. You promised me my life; but you lied. You think that life is nothing but not being stone dead. It is not the bread and water I fear: I can live on bread: when have I asked for more? It is no hardship to drink water if the water be clean. Bread has no sorrow for me, and water no affliction. But to shut me from the light of the sky and the sight of the fields and flowers; to chain my feet that I can never again ride with the soldiers nor climb the hills; to make me breathe foul damp darkness, and keep me from everything that brings me back to the love of God when your wickedness and foolishness tempt me to hate Him: all this is worse than the furnace in the Bible that was heated seven times. I could do without my warhorse; I could drag about in a skirt; I could let the banners and the trumpets and the knights and soldiers pass me and leave me behind as they leave the other women, if only I could still hear the wind in the trees, the larks in the sunshine, the young lambs crying through the healthy frost, and the blessed church bells that send my angel voices floating to me on the wind. But without these things I cannot live; and by your wanting to take them away from me, or any human creature, I know that your counsel is of the devil, and that mine is of God.

14. THE CHERRY ORCHARD by Anton Chekhov -

MADAME RANEVSKY

Please don't go; I want you. At any rate it's brighter when you're here. [A pause] I keep expecting something to happen, as if the house were going to tumble down about our ears. We have been very, very sinful! Oh, the sins that I have committed . . . I've always squandered money at random like a madwoman; I married a man who made nothing but debts. My husband drank himself to death on champagne; he was a fearful drinker. Then for my sins I fell in love and went off with another man; and immediately--that was my first punishment - a blow full on the head . . . here, in this very river . . . my little boy was drowned; and I went abroad, right, right away, never to come back any more, never to see this river again. . . . I shut my eyes and ran, like a mad thing, and he came after me, pitiless and cruel. I bought a villa at Mentone, because he fell ill there, and for three years I knew no rest day or night; the sick man tormented and wore down my soul. Then, last year, when my villa was sold to pay my debts, I went off to Paris, and he came and robbed me of everything, left me and took up with another woman, and I tried to poison myself. . . . It was all so stupid, so humiliating. . . . Then suddenly I longed to be back in Russia, in my own country, with my little girl. . . . [Wiping away her tears] Lord, Lord, be merciful to me; forgive my sins! Do not punish me

anymore! (taking a telegram from her pocket) I got this to-day from Paris. . . . He asks to be forgiven, begs me to come back.

15. WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF by Edward Albee -

MARTHA

You know what's happened, George? You want to know what's really happened? (Snaps his fingers) It's snapped, finally. Not me...it. The whole arrangement. You can go along...forever, and everything's...manageable. You make all sorts of excuses to yourself...you know...this is life...the hell with it...maybe tomorrow he'll be dead...maybe tomorrow you'll be dead...all sorts of excuses. But then, one day, one night, something happens...and SNAP! It breaks. And you just don't give a damn any more. I've tried with you, baby...really tried...I'm loud, and vulgar, and I wear the pants in this house because somebody's got to, but I am not a monster. I am not...SNAP! It went snap. Look, I'm not going to try to get through to you any more...I'm not going to try. There was a second back there, maybe, there was a second, just a second, when I could have gotten through to you, when maybe we could have cut through all this crap. But that's past, and now I'm going to try...You can't come together with nothing, and you're nothing! SNAP! It went snap tonight at Daddy's party. I sat there at Daddy's party, and I watched you...I watched you sitting there, and I watched the younger men around you, the men who were going to go somewhere. And I sat there and I watched you, and you weren't there! And it snapped! It finally snapped! And I'm going to howl it out, and I'm not going to give damn what I do, and I'm going to make the biggest explosion you ever heard.

16. THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES (MY VAGINA WAS MY VILLAGE) by Eve Ensler -

My vagina was green, water soft pink fields, cow mooing sun resting sweet boyfriend touching lightly with soft piece of blonde straw. There is something between my legs. I do not know what it is. I do not know where it is. I do not touch. Not now. Not anymore. Not since.

My vagina was chatty, can't wait, so much, so much saying words talking, can't quit trying, can't quit saying, oh yes, oh yes.

Not since I dream there's a dead animal sewn in down there with thick black fishing line. And the bad dead animal smell cannot be removed. And its throat is slit and it bleeds through all my summer dresses.

My vagina singing all girl songs, all goat bell ringing songs, all wild autumn field songs, vagina songs, vagina home songs.

Not since the soldiers put a long thick rifle inside me. So cold, the steel rod canceling my heart. Don't know whether they're going to fire it or shove it though my spinning brain. Six of them, monstrous doctors with black masks shoving bottles up me too. There were sticks and the end of a broom.

My vagina swimming river water, clean spilling water over sun-baked stones over stone clit, clit stones over and over. Not since I heard the skin tear and made lemon screeching sounds, not since a piece of my vagina came off in my hand, a part of the lip, now one side of the lip is completely gone.

My vagina. A live wet water village. My vagina my hometown.

Not since they took turns for seven days smelling like feces and smoked meat, they left their dirty sperm inside me. I became a river of poison and pus and all the crops died, and the fish.

My vagina a live wet water village.

They invaded it. Butchered it and burned it down.

I do not touch now.

Do not visit.

I live someplace else now.

I don't know where that is.

17. WIT by Margaret Edson -

VIVIAN

(In false familiarity, waving and nodding to the audience)

Hi. How are you feeling today? Great. That's just great.

In her own professional tone.

This is not my standard greeting, I assure you. I tend toward something a little more formal, a little less inquisitive, such as, say, 'Hello.' But it is the standard greeting around here.

There is some debate as to the correct response to this salutation. Should one reply, 'I feel good,' using 'feel' as a copulative to link the subject, 'I', to its subjective complement, 'good'; or 'I feel well,' modifying with an adverb the subject's state of being?

I don't know. I am a professor of seventeenth-century poetry, specialising in the Holy Sonnets of John Donne.

So I just say, 'Fine.'

Of course it is not very often that I do feel fine.

I have been asked 'How are you feeling today?' while I was throwing up into a plastic washbasin. I have been asked as I was emerging from a four-hour operation with a tube in every orifice, 'How are you feeling today?'

I am waiting for the moment when someone asks me this question and I am dead.

I'm very sorry I'll miss that.

It is unfortunate that this remarkable line of inquiry has come to me so late in my career. I could have exploited its feigned solicitude to great advantage: as I was distributing the final examination to the graduate course in seventeenth-century textual criticism - 'Hi. How are you feeling today?'

Of course I would not be wearing this ridiculous costume at the time, so the question's ironic significance would not be fully apparent.

As I trust it is now.

Irony is a literary device that will necessarily be deployed to great effect.

I ardently wish this were not so. I would prefer that a play about me be cast in the mythic-heroic-pastoral mode; but the facts, most notably stage-four metastatic ovarian cancer, conspire against that. The Faerie Queen this is not.

And I was dismayed to discover that the play would contain elements of...humour.

I have been, at best, an unwitting accomplice.

She pauses.

It is not my intention to give away the plot; but I think I die at the end.

They've given me less than two hours.

If I were poetically inclined, I might employ a threadbare metaphor - the sands of time slipping through the hour-glass, the two-hour glass.

Now our sands are almost run;

More a little, and then dumb.

Shakespeare. I trust the name is familiar.

At the moment, however, I am disinclined to poetry.

I've got less than two hours. Then: curtain.

18. CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF by Tennessee Williams:

MARGARET

Brick, don't brain me yet, let me finish! – I know, believe me I know, that it was only Skipper that harboured even any *unconscious* desire for anything not perfectly pure between you two! – Now let me skip a little. You married me early that summer we graduated out of Ole Miss, and we were happy, weren't we, we were blissful, yes, hit heaven together ev'ry time that we loved! But that fall you an' Skipper turned down wonderful offers of jobs in order to keep on bein' football heroes – pro-football heroes. You organized the Dixie Stars that fall, so you could keep on bein' team mates for ever! But somethin' was not right with it! – *Me included!* – Between you. Skipper began hittin' the bottle... you got a spinal injury - couldn't play the Thanksgivin' game in Chicago, watched it on TV from a traction bed in Toledo. I joined Skipper. The Dixie Stars lost because poor Skipper was drunk. We drank together that night all night in the bar of the Blackstone and when cold day was comin' up over the Lake an' we were comin' out Drunk to take a dizzy look at it, I said, 'SKIPPER! STOP LOVIN' MY HUSBAND OR TELL HIM HE'S GOT TO LET YOU ADMIT IT TO HIM!' – One way or another! HE SLAPPED ME HARD ON MY MOUTH! – then turned and ran without stopping once, I am sure, all the way back into his room at the Blackstone... - When I came to his room that night, with a little scratch like a shy little mouse at his door, he made that pitiful, ineffectual little attempt to prove that what I had said wasn't true... - in this way, I destroyed him, by telling him truth that he and his world which he was born and raised in, yours and his world, had told him could not be told?

19. EAST by Stephen Berkoff –

SYLV

At it they went ... it weren't half fun at first it weren't my fault those jestingjousting lads should want a tournament of hurt and crunch and blood and shriek ... all on my dress it went ... That's Micky's blood I thought ... it seemed to shoot up from something that cracked ... I saw him mimicking an oilwell ... though he'd take off many things for a laugh this time I did not laugh so much ... they fought for me ... thy blood my royal Mick wast shed for me and never shall the suds of Persil or Daz remove that royal emblem from that skirt that many times you gently lifted in the Essoldo Bethnal Green. I was that monument of flesh thy wanton hands would smash and grab, I only clocked the other geezer Mike, and can I help if my proud tits should draw their leery eyes to feast on them ... and now a hate doth sunder our strong love and never more will my soft thighs be prised apart by his fierce knees with 'open them thou bitch before I ram a knuckle sandwich in thy painted boat'. I miss him true in spite of all anddid not wish to see him mashed and broken like a bloody doll ... but now the bastard blameth me for all and seeks vile vengeance on my

pretty head ... which if he tries will sorely grieve my brothers Bert and George who will not hesitate to finish off the bits that Les did leave but all this chat of violence I hate ... is ultra horrible to me that thrives on love and tongue-wrenched kisses in the back of MG Sprites with a 'stop I'm not like that!' ... Oh just for now which doth ensure a second date, so hold a morsel back girls and he'll crave it all the more.

20. MINE by Polly Teale -

ROSE

I come because I wanted to meet you. Wanted to be here when you ... There's things you should know. I need to tell you. She don't like being laid on her back, you see. That's why she's crying. She likes to be up so's she can see what's going on. Do you mind if I show you, because that's the easiest way, isn't it.

ROSE takes the baby and holds her on her shoulder. The crying subsides.

That's it. That's better. There's a good girl. Shshsh. She's all right now, see. I was the oldest of nine so I got lots of practice. My folks were out most of the time, left it to me, so you see, I know about babies. About children. There's nothing I don't know about kids. She's alright now. She can smell me, cant she. They say that, don't they. They can smell you. Hear your voice. All them months inside, listening to you. Strange to think she was inside me only a few weeks ago. Sometimes wish she was still there. Miss her, don't I, giving me indigestion, keeping me awake at night. Making me sick.

Magic, int it? Like a miracle, what grows in there. Not just skin, but nails and hair and eyelashes and perfect little ears, like seashells. Purple, she were, when she come out. Like part of your insides. Part of you ripped out. All them days, weeks, months spent wondering what she'd look like, and here she is. Here you are.

Only you can' tell yet, can you. Takes years, don't it... to become ...themselves, to see who they're going to be. To know who they are. I'm her mother. Rose. I know your names. They told me. You're going to foster her until I'm ready –

Not get involved. She's my baby.

I wanted to feed her myself, but they said I couldn't. Gave me pills to dry it up, but I didn't take them. It leaks out when she cries. I think she can smell them, like an animal, isn't it. You realise that, when you have a baby. We're animals. Things happen. Nothing to do with you. It's the body. Takes over. The instinct.

Don't seem fair, does it. I got it. She wants it, but they won't let me give it to her.

Won't let me. They won't let me.

21. THE TAMING OF THE SHREW by William Shakespeare -

KATE

Fie, fie! Unknit that threatening unkind brow,
 And dart not scornful glances from those eyes,
 To wound thy lord, thy king, thy governor.
 It blots thy beauty as frosts do bite the meads,
 Confounds thy fame as whirlwinds shake fair buds,
 And in no sense is meet or amiable.

A woman mov'd is like a fountain troubled,
 Muddy, ill-seeming, thick, bereft of beauty,
 And while it is so, none so dry or thirsty
 Will deign to sip or touch one drop of it.
 Thy husband is thy lord, thy life, thy keeper,
 Thy head, thy sovereign; one that cares for thee,
 And for thy maintenance; commits his body
 To painful labour both by sea and land,
 To watch the night in storms, the day in cold,
 Whilst thou liest warm at home, secure and safe;
 And craves no other tribute at thy hands
 But love, fair looks, and true obedience;
 Too little payment for so great a debt.
 Such duty as the subject owes the prince
 Even such a woman oweth to her husband.
 And when she is froward, peevish, sullen, sour,
 And not obedient to his honest will,
 What is she but a foul contending rebel
 And graceless traitor to her loving lord?
 I am asham'd that women are so simple
 To offer war where they should kneel for peace,
 Or seek for rule, supremacy, and sway,
 When they are bound to serve, love, and obey.
 Why are our bodies soft, and weak, and smooth,
 Unapt to toil and trouble in the world,
 But that our soft conditions and our hearts
 Should well agree with our external parts?
 Come, come, you froward and unable worms,
 My mind hath been as big as one of yours,
 My heart as great, my reason haply more,
 To bandy word for word and frown for frown.
 But now I see our lances are but straws,
 Our strength as weak, our weakness past compare,
 That seeming to be most which we indeed least are.
 Then vail your stomachs, for it is no boot,
 And place your hands below your husband's foot.
 In token of which duty, if he please,
 My hand is ready, may it do him ease.

22. MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING by William Shakespeare -

BEATRICE

Kill Claudio! You kill me to deny it. Farewell. I am gone, though I am
 here: there is no love in you: nay, I pray you, let me go. In faith, I will go. You
 dare easier be friends with me than fight with my enemy. Is Claudio not
 approved in the height a villain, that hath slandered, scorned, dishonoured

my kinswoman? O that I were a man! What, bear her in hand until they come to take hands ; and then, with public accusation, uncovered slander, unmitigated rancour, – O, God that I were a man! I would eat his heart in the market-place. Talk with a man out at window! A proper saying! Sweet Hero! She is wronged, she is slandered, she is undone. Princes and counties! Surely, a princely testimony, a goodly count, Count Comfect; a sweet gallant surely! O that I were a man for his sake! Or that I had any friend would be a man for my sake! But manhood is melted into courtesies, valour into compliment, and men are only turned into tongue, and trim ones too : he is now as valiant as Hercules that only tells a lie and swears it. I cannot be a man with wishing, therefore I will die a woman with grieving.

23. RICHARD III by William Shakespeare -

LADY ANNE

What, do you tremble? Are you all afraid?
 Alas, I blame you not; for you are mortal,
 And mortal eyes cannot endure the devil.
 Avaunt, thou dreadful minister of hell!
 Thou hadst but power over his mortal body:
 His soul thou canst not have; therefore begone.
 Foul devil, for God's sake, hence, and trouble us not;
 For thou hast made the happy earth thy hell,
 Fill'd it with cursing cries and deep exclaims.
 If thou delight to view thy heinous deeds,
 Behold this pattern of thy butcheries.
 O gentlemen! See, see dead Henry's wounds
 Open their congeal'd mouths and bleed afresh.
 Blush, Blush, thou lump of foul deformity,
 For 'tis thy presence that exhales this blood
 From cold and empty veins where no blood dwells:
 Thy deed, inhuman and unnatural
 Provokes this deluge most unnatural.
 O God! Which this blood mad'st, revenge his death;
 O earth! Which this blood drink'st, revenge his death;
 Either heav'n with lightning strike the murderer dead,
 Or earth gape open wide and eat him quick,
 As thou dost swallow up this good King's blood
 Which his hell-govern'd arm hath butchered.

24. THE CRUCIBLE by Arthur Miller -

MARY WARREN

I never knew it before. I never knew anything before. When she come into the court I say to myself, I must not accuse this woman, for she sleeps in ditches, and so very old and poor. But then- then she sit there,

denying and denying, and I feel a misty coldness climbin' up my back, and the skin on my skull begin to creep, and I feel a clamp around my neck and I cannot breathe air; and then (*entranced*) I hear a voice, a screamin' voice, and it were my voice- and all at once I remembered everything she done to me! (*Like one awakened to a marvelous secret insight.*) *So many times, Mr. Proctor, she come to this very door, beggin' bread and a cup of cider-and mark this: whenever I turned her away empty, she mumbled. But what does she mumble? You must remember, Goody Proctor. Last month-a Monday, I think--she walked away, and I thought my guts would burst for two days after. Do you remember it? And so I told that to Judge Hathorne, and he asks her so. "Sarah Good," says he, "what curse do you mumble that this girl must fall sick after turning you away?" And then she replies (mimicking an old crone) "Why, your excellence, no curse at all. I only say my commandments; I hope I may say my commandments," says she! Then Judge Hathorne say, "Recite for us your commandments!" (Leaning avidly toward them) And of all the ten she could not say a single one. She never knew no commandments, and they had her in a flat lie!*

25. AN IDEAL HUSBAND by Oscar Wilde

MABEL

Well, Tommy has proposed to me again. Tommy really does nothing but propose to me. He proposed to me last night in the music-room, when I was quite unprotected, as there was an elaborate trio going on. I didn't dare to make the smallest repartee, I need hardly tell you. If I had, it would have stopped the music at once. Musical people are so absurdly unreasonable. They always want one to be perfectly dumb at the very moment when one is longing to be absolutely deaf. Then he proposed to me in broad daylight this morning, in front of that dreadful statue of Achilles. Really, the things that go on in front of that work of art are quite appalling. The police should interfere. At luncheon I saw by the glare in his eye that he was going to propose again, and I just managed to check him in time by assuring him that I was a bimetallist. Fortunately, I don't know what bimetallism means. And I don't believe anybody else does either. But the observation crushed Tommy for ten minutes. He looked quite shocked. And then Tommy is so annoying in the way he proposes. If he proposed at the top of his voice, I should not mind so much. That might produce some effect on the public. But he does it in a horrid confidential way. When Tommy wants to be romantic he talks to one just like a doctor. I am very fond of Tommy, but his methods of proposing are quite out of date. I wish, Gertrude, you would speak to him, and tell him that once a week is quite often enough to propose to anyone, and that it should always be done in a manner that attracts some attention.

26. THE SEAGULL by Anton Chekov

NINA MIKHAELOVNA ZARECHNAYA

Why do you say you kiss the ground I walk on? You should have killed me instead (*Leans on the table*). I'm so tired! I want to rest; I just want to rest! (*Raises her head*) I'm the seagull... No, that's not it. I'm an actress. That's it. (*From the other room we hear Arkadina and Trigorin laughing. Nina listens for a minute, goes to the left door, and looks through the keyhole*) He's here, too. (*Crosses to Konstantin*) He is, isn't he? Well, never mind. He never believed in the theatre, he laughed at all my dreams, and little by little I stopped believing in it too. And then all the emotional stress, the jealousy; I was always afraid for the baby... I started getting petty, depressed, my acting was emptier and emptier... strains of love, jealousy, constant fear for the child... I didn't know what to do with my hands, I didn't know how to hold myself onstage, I couldn't control my voice. You don't know what that's like, to realize you're a terrible actor. I'm the seagull... No, that's not it... Remember that seagull you shot? A man comes along, sees her, and destroys her life because he has nothing better to do... subject for a short story. No, that's not it... (*Rubs her forehead*) What was I saying? Oh, yes, the theatre... I'm not like that anymore. I'm a real actress now, I

enjoy acting, I'm proud of it, the stage intoxicates me. When I'm up there I feel beautiful. And these days, being back here, walking for hours on end, thinking and thinking, I could feel my soul growing stronger day after day. And now I know, Kostya, I understand, finally, that in our business—acting, writing, it makes no difference—the main thing isn't being famous, it's not the sound of applause, it's not what I dreamed it was. All it is is the strength to keep going, no matter what happens. You have to keep on believing. I believe, and it helps. And now when I think about my vocation, I'm not afraid of life. Shh... I'd better go. Goodbye. When I become a great actress, come watch me act, won't you? Promise. It's late. (Takes his hand) I can barely stand. I'm so tired, I'm so hungry... No, don't come with me, I can go by myself; it's not far to where the carriage is....So she brought him with her, didn't she? Oh, well, what difference does it make? When You see Trigorin, don't say anything about this... I love him. I love him even more than before. Subject for a short story. I love him, I love him, I love him to despair. Things were so lovely back then, Kostya, weren't they? Remember? We thought life was bright, shining, joyful, and our feelings were like delicate flowers. Remember?

27. THE CAGEBIRDS by David Campton –

WILD ONE (shouting) Listen to me! All of you! You could be free. All of you! Must I be caged because you lack willpower? (she pauses, looks around her. She gives a rueful little laugh) I have no right, have I? No right to commit such an outrage. I come bustling in – actually I was tossed in, but let that pass. I come hurtling in, and within minutes turn your comfortable, satisfied, non-communicating, slave society upside down. I tear down the paper screens you built so carefully. I blew great gusts through the hot-house air. I shatter your fragile Sunday quiet. No, I didn't I only tried. I didn't succeed. I couldn't succeed, because you're not alive. You can't be alive, because if you were, you'd be charging at that door with me. This very minute. All shoulders together. Boom! Thud! Pow! Crash! But there you sit. I haven't the right to stir the dust. I'm the Wild One who doesn't belong. Ignore her, because if you didn't you'd either have to break out or break down. I'm sorry. No, I'm not, but it's an accepted figure of speech. I'm sorry, but if you don't like me, you'll have to do the other thing. I'm sorry, but I'm the Wild One, and the cage hasn't been built that can hold me. (She takes a long run at the door, hurls herself at it with such force that she bounces off. The impact whirls her round until she collapses).

28. 4.48 PSYCHOSIS by Sarak Kane

GIRL

Body and soul can never be married

I need to become who I already am and will bellow forever at this incongruity which has committed me to hell

Insoluble hoping cannot uphold me

I will drown in dysphoria

in the cold black pond of my self

the pit of my immaterial mind

How can I return to form

now my formal thought has gone?

Not a life that I could countenance.

They will love me for that which destroys me

the sword in my dreams

the dust of my thoughts

the sickness that breeds in the folds of my mind

Every compliment takes a piece of my soul

An expressionist nag

Stalling between two fools

They know nothing –

I have always walked free
 Last in a long line of literary kleptomaniacs
 (a time honoured tradition)
 Theft is the holy act
 On a twisted path to expression
 A glut of exclamation marks spells impending nervous breakdown
 Just a word on a page and there is the drama
 I write for the dead
 the unborn
 After 4.48 I shall not speak again
 I have reached the end of his dreary and repugnant tale of a sense interned in an alien carcass and
 lumpen by the malignant spirit of the moral majority
 I have been dead for a long time
 Back to my roots
 I sing without hope on the boundary

29. ROMEO AND JULIET by William Shakespeare

JULIET

Thou know'st the mask of night is on my face,
 Else would a maiden blush bepaint my cheek
 For that which thou hast heard me speak to-night
 Fain would I dwell on form, fain, fain deny
 What I have spoke: but farewell compliment!
 Dost thou love me? I know thou wilt say 'Ay,'
 And I will take thy word: yet if thou swear'st,
 Thou mayst prove false; at lovers' perjuries
 Then say, Jove laughs. O gentle Romeo,
 If thou dost love, pronounce it faithfully:
 Or if thou think'st I am too quickly won,
 I'll frown and be perverse and say thee nay,
 So thou wilt woo; but else, not for the world.
 In truth, fair Montague, I am too fond,
 And therefore thou mayst think my 'havior light:
 But trust me, gentleman, I'll prove more true
 Than those that have more cunning to be strange.
 I should have been more strange, I must confess,
 But that thou overheard'st, ere I was ware,
 My true love's passion: therefore pardon me,
 And not impute this yielding to light love,
 Which the dark night hath so discovered.

30. GOODBYE CHARLES by Gabriel Davis

JILL

I ate them. That's right. I ate the divorce papers, Charles. I ate them with ketchup. And they were good...goood. You probably want me to get serious about our divorce. The thing is you always called our marriage a joke. So let's use logic here: If A we never had a serious marriage then B we can't have a serious divorce. No. We can't. The whole thing's a farce, Charles – a farce that tastes good with ketchup. I mean, wasn't it last week, your dad asked you the reason you walked down that aisle with me, and you said "for the exercise." Ha, ha. That's funny. You're a funny guy, Charles. I'm laughing, not a crying. Ha, ha. I'm laughing because you're about to give up on a woman who is infinitely lovable. For instance: Paul. He has loved me since the eighth grade. Sure, he's a little creepy, but he reeeally loves

me. He's made one hundred twenty seven passes at me, proposed forty seven times, and sent me over two hundred original love sonnets. He sees something in me, Charles. And he writes it down, in metered verse! And that's not something you just find everyday. Someone who really loves everything about who you are as a person. Paul may be insane, but I value his feelings for me.

I would never ask him to sign his name to a piece of paper promising to just turn off his feelings for me forever. But that's what you're asking me to do, for you. To sign away my right to...to that sweet voice Charles, those baby brown eyes, the way your hands feel through my hair before bed...

Those aren't things I want to lose. In fact, I won't lose them. I won't lose you. I'll woo you. I've written you a sonnet. "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day. Thou art more lovely and more temperate, rough winds do shake the darling buds of may and..." I'm not crying. I'm laughing. It's all a big joke. It's very funny, Charles. I keep waiting for you to say "April Fools." Then I'll rush into your arms and... But you're not going to, are you? No. Of course not. It's not April.

I, I didn't really write that sonnet, you know. Paul did. I think it's good.

You see, the truth...the truth is, Charles, I ate the divorce papers, I ate them, because I can't stomach the thought of losing you.

MALE CHARACTER MONOLOGUES

1. ALL MY SONS by Arthur Miller -

CHRIS

Yes. I suppose I have been ashamed. But it's going from me ... I want to tell you but I don't know how to start ... It's all mixed up with so many other things ... You remember, overseas, I was in command of a company? ... Well, I lost them ... Just about all ... It takes a little time to toss that off. Because they weren't just men. For instance, one time it'd been raining for several days and this kid came to me, and gave me his last pair of dry socks. Put them in my pocket. That's only a little thing - but ... that's the kind of guys I had. They didn't die; they killed themselves for each other. I mean that exactly; a little more selfish and they'd've been here today. And I got an idea - watching them go down. Everything was being destroyed, ses, but it seemed to me that one new thing was being made. A kind of-responsibility man for man. You understand me? - To show that, to bring that onto the earth again like some kind of monument and everyone would feel it standing there, behind him, and it would make a difference to him. (Pause) And then I came home and it was incredible. I - there was no meaning in it here; the whole thing to them was a kind a - bus accident. I went to work with Dad, and that rat-race again. I felt - what you said - ashamed somehow. Because nobody was changed at all. It seemed to make suckers out of a lot of guys. I felt wrong to be alive, to open the bank-book, to drive the new car, to see the new refrigerator. I mean you can take those things out of a war, but when you drive that car you've got to know that it came out of the love a man can have for a man, you've got to be a little better because of that. Otherwise what you have is really loot, and there's blood on it. I didn't want to take any of it. And I guess that includes you.

2. ANGELS IN AMERICA PART II - PERESTROIKA by Tony Kushner -

BELIZE

What did you drag me out here for, Louis, I don't have time for you. You walk out on your lover. Days don't pass before you are out on the town with somebody new. But this...this is a record low: sharing your dank and dirty bed with Roy Cohn's buttboy. Doesn't that bother you at all? Your little friend didn't tell you, huh? You and Hoss Cartwright, it's not a verbal kind of thing, you just kick off your boots and hit the hay. I don't know whether Mr Cohn has penetrated more than his spiritual sphincter. All I'm saying is you better hope there's no GOP germ, Louis, 'cause if there is, you got it ... And he's a clerk for a Republican federal judge ... You know what your problem is, Louis? Your problem is that you are so full of piping hot crap that the mention of your name draws flies. Just to set the record straight: I love Prior but was never in love with him. I have a man, uptown, and have since long before I first laid my eyes on the sorry-ass sight of you. But you didn't know 'cause you never bothered to ask. Up in the air, just like that angel, too far off the earth to

pick out the details. Louis and his Big Ideas. Big ideas are all you love. "America" is what Louis loves. Well I hate America, Louis. I hate this country. It's just big ideas, and stories, and people dying, and people like you. The white cracker who wrote the National Anthem knew what he was doing. He set the word "free" to a note so high nobody can reach it. That was deliberate. Nothing on earth sounds less like freedom to me. You come to room 1013 over at the hospital, I'll show you America. Terminal, crazy and mean. (Pause) I live in America, Louis, that's hard enough, I don't have to love it. You do that. Everybody's got to love something.

3. DEATH OF A SALESMAN by Arthur Miller -

BIFF

Now hear this, Willy, this is me ... You know why I had no address for three months? I stole a suit in Kansas City and was in jail ... I stole myself out of every good job since high school! And I never got anywhere because you blew me so full of hot air I could never stand taking orders from anybody! That's whose fault it is! I had to be boss big shot in two weeks, and I'm through with it! I ran down eleven flights with a pen in my hand today. And suddenly I stopped, you hear me? And in the middle of that office building, do you hear this? I stopped in the middle of that office building and I saw - the sky. I saw the things that I love in this world. The work and the food and the time to sit and smoke. And I looked at the pen and said to myself, what the hell am I grabbing this for? Why am I trying to become what I don't want to be? What am I doing in an office, making a contemptuous, begging fool of myself, when all I want is out there, waiting for the minute I say I know who I am! Why can't I say that, Willy? ... Pop! I'm a dime a dozen, and so are you! I am not a leader of men, Willy, neither are you. You were never anything but a hardworking drummer who landed in the ash-can like all the rest of them! I'm one dollar an hour! Do you gather my meaning? I'm not bringing home any prizes anymore, and you're going to stop waiting for me to bring them home! ... Pop, I'm nothing! I'm nothing, Pop. Can't you understand that? There's no spite in it anymore. I'm just saying what I am, that's all. (Crying, broken) Will you let me go for Christ's sake? Will you take that phony dream and burn it before something happens?

4. GLENGARRY GLEN ROSS by David Mamet -

BLAKE

Let me have your attention for a moment! So you're talking about what? You're talking about, bitching about that sale you shot, some son of a bitch that doesn't want what your selling, some broad you're trying to screw and so forth. Let's talk about something important. Put that coffee down! Coffee's for closers only. Do you think I'm fucking with you? I'm here from downtown. I'm here from Mitch and Murray. And I'm here on a mission of mercy. Your name's Levene? You call yourself a salesman, you son of a bitch? You don't want to listen to this? You certainly don't pal. 'Cause the good news is - you're fired. The bad news is you've got, all you got, just one week to regain your jobs, starting tonight. Starting with tonight's sit. Oh, have I got your attention now? Good. 'Cause we're adding a little something to this month's sales contest. As you all know, first prize is a Cadillac Eldorado. Anyone want to see second prize? Second prize is a set of steak knives. Third prize is you're fired. You get the picture? You're laughing now? You got leads. Mitch and Murray pay good money. Get their names to sell them! You can't close the leads you're given, you can't close shit, you are shit, hit the bricks pal and beat it 'cause you are going out! * 'The leads are weak.' Fucking leads are weak? You're weak. I've been in this business fifteen years. * What's my name? Fuck you, that's my name! You know why, Mister? 'Cause you drove a Hyundai to get here tonight, I drove an eighty thousand dollar BMW. That's my name! And your name is "you're waiting." And you can't play a man's game. You can't close them. And you go home and tell your wife your troubles. Because only one thing counts in this life! Get them to sign on the line which is dotted! You hear me, you fucking faggots?

5. LOOK BACK IN ANGER by John Osborne -

JIMMY

Anyone who's never watched somebody die is suffering from a pretty bad case of virginity. (His good humour of a moment ago deserts him, as he begins to remember) For twelve months, I watched my father dying - when I was ten years old. He'd come back from the war in Spain, you see. And certain god-fearing gentlemen there had made such a mess of him, he didn't have long left to live. Everyone knew it - even I knew it. But, you see, I was the only one who cared. His family were embarrassed by the whole business. Embarrassed and irritated. As for my mother, all she could think about was the fact that she had allied herself to a man who seemed to be on the wrong side in all things. My mother was all for being associated with minorities, provided they were the smart, fashionable ones. We all of us waited for him to die. The family sent him a cheque every month, and hoped he'd get on with it quietly, without too much vulgar fuss. My mother looked after him without complaining, and that was about all. Perhaps she pitied him. I suppose she was capable of that. (With a kind of appeal in his voice). But I was the only one who cared! Every time I sat on the edge of his bed, to listen to him talking or reading to me, I had to fight back my tears. At the end of twelve months, I was a veteran. All that that feverish failure of a man had to listen to him was a small, frightened boy. I spent hour upon hour in that tiny bedroom. He would talk to me for hours, pouring out all that was left of his life to one, lonely, bewildered little boy, who could barely understand half of what he said. All he could feel was the despair and bitterness, the sweet, sickly smell of a dying man. You see, I learnt at an early age what it is to be angry - angry and helpless. And I can never forget it. I knew more about - love...betrayal...and death, when I was ten years old then you will probably ever know all your life.

6. JOURNEY'S END by R. C. Sherriff -

STANHOPE

God! - you little swine. You know what that means - don't you? Striking a superior officer! (Takes a gun) Never mind, though. I won't have you shot for that - ...If you went, I'd have you shot for deserting. It's a hell of a disgrace - to die like that. I'd rather spare you the disgrace. I give you half a minute to think. You either stay here and try and be a man - or you try to get out that door - to desert. If you do that, there's going to be an accident. D'you understand? I'm fiddling with my revolver, d'you see? - Cleaning it - and it goes off by accident. It often happens out here. It's going off, and it's going to shoot you between the eyes. (Pause).....You don't deserve to be shot by accident - but I'd save you the disgrace of the other way - I give you half a minute to decide. (Silence - softening, gently) I know what you feel, Hibbert. I've known all along. Because I feel the same - exactly the same. Every little noise up there makes me feel - just as you feel. Why didn't you tell me instead of talking about neuralgia? We all feel like you do sometimes, if you only knew. I hate and loath it all. Sometimes I feel I could just lie down on this bed and pretend I was paralysed or something - and couldn't move - and just lie there till I die - or was dragged away. (Pause) Shall we both go on together? We know how we both feel now. Shall we see if we can't stick it together? (Pause) Supposing I said I can't - supposing we all say we can't - what would happen then? (Pause) Supposing the worst happened - supposing we were knocked right out. Think of all the chaps who've gone already. It can't be very lonely there - with all those fellows. Sometimes I think it's lonelier here. (Pause) If you went and left Osborne and Trotter and Raleigh and all those men up there to do your work - could you ever look a man straight in the face again - in all your life? (Silence) You may be wounded. Then you can go home and feel proud - and if you're killed - you won't have to stand this hell anymore. I might have fired just now. If I had you would be dead now. But you're still alive - with a straight fighting chance of coming through. Take the chance, old chap, and stand in with Osborne and Trotter and Raleigh. Don't think it worth standing in with men like that? - when you know they all feel like you do - in their hearts - and just go on sticking it out because they know it's - it's the only thing a decent man can do. (Silence) What about it?

7. KING LEAR (ACT 1, SCENE 2) by William Shakespeare -

EDMUND

Thou, Nature, art my goddess; to thy law
 My services are bound. Wherefore should I
 Stand in the plague of custom, and permit
 The curiosity of nations to deprive me,
 For that I am some twelve or fourteen moonshines
 Lag of a brother? Why bastard? Wherefore base?
 When my dimensions are as well compact,
 My mind as generous, and my shape as true,
 As honest madam's issue? Why brand they us
 With base? with baseness? bastardy? base, base?
 Who in the lusty stealth of nature take
 More composition and fierce quality
 Than doth, within a dull, stale, tired bed,
 Go to th' creating of a whole tribe of fops,
 Got 'tween asleep and wake? Well then,
 Legitimate Edgar, I must have your land:
 Our father's love is to the bastard Edmund
 As to th' legitimate. Fine word "legitimate"!
 Well, my legitimate, if this letter speed,
 And my invention thrive, Edmund the base
 Shall top th' legitimate -: I grow, I prosper;
 Now, gods, stand up for bastards!

8. GREEK (From Collected Plays Volume 1) by Steven Berkoff -

EDDY

My dearest wife and now my mum, it seems, this lady was the very one whose baby you snatched / she told me the selfsame and bitter tale of how she lost her Tony and if you found him then I am he, he whom you found that belonged to her was me. The he you stole and gave to her did once belong to she...nice to see ya, have a nice day, so I am the squelchy mass of flesh that issued from out the loins of my dear wife / oh rats of shit / you opened a right box there didn't you, you picked up a stone that was best left with all those runny black and horrid things intact and not nibbling in my brain. So the man I verballed to death was my real pop / the man to whom my words like hard-edged shrapnel razed his brain / was the source of me, oh stink/ warlock and eyes break shatter, cracker and splatter ...! / Who laughs? Me who wants to clean up the city / stop the plague destroy the sphinx / me was the source of all the stink / the man of principle is a mother fucker / oh no more will I taste the sweetness of my dear wife's pillow ...no more ...no more.... so I left my cosy and love-filled niche now so full of horror / foul incest and babies on the way which if they come will no doubt turn into six-fingered horrors with two heads /poor Eddy.

9. LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST (ACT 3, SCENE 1) by William Shakespeare -

BEROWNE

And I, forsooth, in love! I, that have been love's whip;
 A very beadle to a humorous sigh;
 A critic, nay, a night-watch constable;
 A domineering pedant o'er the boy;
 Than whom no mortal so magnificent!
 This whimpled, whining, purblind, wayward boy;
 This senior-junior, giant-dwarf, Dan Cupid;
 Regent of love-rhymes, lord of folded arms,
 The anointed sovereign of sighs and groans,
 Liege of all loiterers and malcontents,
 Dread prince of plackets, king of codpieces,
 Sole imperator and great general
 Of trotting 'paritors:--O my little heart:--
 And I to be a corporal of his field,
 And wear his colours like a tumbler's hoop!
 What, I! I love! I sue! I seek a wife!
 A woman, that is like a German clock,
 Still a-repairing, ever out of frame,
 And never going aright, being a watch,
 But being watch'd that it may still go right!
 Nay, to be perjured, which is worst of all;
 And, among three, to love the worst of all;
 A wightly wanton with a velvet brow,
 With two pitch-balls stuck in her face for eyes;
 Ay, and by heaven, one that will do the deed
 Though Argus were her eunuch and her guard:
 And I to sigh for her! to watch for her!
 To pray for her! Go to; it is a plague
 That Cupid will impose for my neglect
 Of his almighty dreadful little might.
 Well, I will love, write, sigh, pray, sue and groan:
 Some men must love my lady and some Joan.

10. MOTHER COURAGE AND HER CHILDREN by Bertolt Brecht -

THE SERGEANT

What they could do with round here is a good war. What else can you expect with peace running wild all over the place? You know what the trouble with peace is? No organisation. And when do you get organisation? In a war. Peace is one big waste of equipment. Anything goes, no one gives a damn. See the way they eat? Cheese on pumpernickel, bacon on cheese? Disgusting! How many horses have they got I this town? How many young men? Nobody knows! They haven't bothered to count 'em! That's peace for you! I've been in places where they haven't had a war for seventy years and you know what? The people haven't even been given names! They don't know who they are! It takes a war to fix that. In a war, everyone registers, everyone's name is on a list. Their shoes are stacked, their corn's in the bag, you count it all up - cattle, men, et cetera - and you take it away! That's the story: no organisation, no war! Of course, a war's like any good deal: hard to get going. But when it does get moving, it's a winner, and they're scared of peace, like dice-playing who daren't stop - 'cause when peace comes they have to pay up. Of course, until it gets going, they're just as scared of was, it's such a novelty!

11. WEST by Stephen Berkoff

MIKE

He hits me with a hook / I'm down / a bolt to fell an ox / crumbles slow / then smashes me with a right / and now / I sway / a drunk looking for a hold / a volley a hard straight comes whipping out / smashing home / I go down slow like the *Titanic* / but grab hold on the way / and drag him down leaking red from all openings but still I hold him / close / he can't be hit / too close / and with my almighty arm I lock his neck into a vice / where do I get the strength / the brute's amazed thinking it was all done / but he finds his head being smashed into the wall / but like he's made of rock / he twists himself from out my grip like some mad demented bull and snorts screams and kicks but by this time I dodge the sledge hammers and hold him at bay / alive again as if the blows have woken me from some deep sleep / I'm myself again / we move and circle / it's quiet as the grave / all tense waiting / the beast kicks out and hard / I grab a leg / and down he falls / hard / but with almighty strength the brute is up again / sneers and foams / and rams his fingers round my throat / grips hard / the others roundabout / screaming / kill the bastard / tear out his guts / and rip his balls off / I pull off his wrist and then we twist / fall / rolling / each trying to find a hold / and lashing out from time to time / knee / elbow / head / boot / whatever finds itself unoccupied and free for service / we break away and stand streaming like two dragons breathing flame / fighting to the death / each waiting for the other to move / still / just the sound of breath / then in the beast goes and fast and throws himself on me like to annihilate me once and for all / I go flying back thrown by the mass of hate and crash both down in a welter of struggling seething flesh / twisting foaming heaving screaming / I'm stomped on / sounds unearthly are heard / I fear it must end / and bad / he's on my chest / his fist drawn back / one horrible almighty gnarl of bone and brought it crashing down on to my face / pow and then gain pow and now again pow / I can hear the sickening crunch /but I protect what how I can / draw energy from the deep and thrust my hand up underneath his jaw / with the other I smash it home / the brute stumbles / pulled off balance / my face is crimson blind by blood / I wipe with one hand / I'm upon him now spraying his blood on both like we were swimming in it / this time grip his throat and hold it fast / tight / tighter / after long time we topple over / again / rise slow like prehistoric monsters / the beast screaming / words /spitting out / no meaning / splattered curses / he bows like to pounce again / I then kick / it lands home dead square in the face / then follow up both hands working like pumps / like you never saw.

12. ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN ARE DEAD by Tom Stoppard -

PLAYER

Don't you see?! We're actors - we're the opposite of people! Think, in your head, now, think of the most..private ...secret ...intimate thing you have ever done secure in the knowledge of its privacy. (Pause) Are you thinking of it? Well, I saw you do it! We're actors...We pledge our identities, secure in the conventions of our trade; that someone would be watching. And then, gradually, no one was. We were caught high and dry. It was not until the murderer's long soliloquy that we were able to look around; frozen as we were in profile, our eyes searched you out, first confidently, then hesitantly, then desperately as each patch of turf, each log, every exposed corner in every direction proved uninhabited, and all the while the murderous king addressed the horizon with his dreary interminable guilt...Our heads began to move, wary as lizards, the corpse of unsullied Rosalinda peeped through his fingers, and the King faltered. Even then, habit and a stubborn trust that our audience spied upon us from behind the nearest bush, forced our bodies to blunder on long after they had emptied of meaning, until like runaway carts they dragged us to a halt. No one came forward. No one shouted at us. The silence was unbreakable, it imposed itself upon us; it was obscene. We took off our crowns and swords and cloth of gold and moved silent on the road to Elsinore.

13. ROAD by Jim Cartwright -

SKIN LAD

He sees you. He wants to tell you the story. He feels the need to drift back on the tide of his memory, back, back, back. And I'm the lonely skinhead again. Jogging away, everyday, to be the best, to be the best. And the press-ups. And the sit-ups. And the one-two-three, one-two-three, one-two-three, one-two-three. And you've gotta be fit to fight, and I do every Saturday night, with my friends at weekends, fight. Do you know about fighting? No. I'll tell you in my story. And I want to be the best skinhead and I want to give everything, every single thing, to the experience the tingle. I'll tell you about the tingle later. And you've gotta be fit to fight, and practise tactics every night. Do you? I do. (Practises.) Do you work in the asphalt factory? I did. (Practises, stops.) I'll explain. (He indicates imaginary opponent.) My opponent! Anyone you like. City fan, the cunt that shagged Ricky's bird, Ted the foreman. You choose. Targets! (Indicates down imaginary body.) Face, neck, beerbag, dick, shin, top of the foot. Top of the foot. Today I want the neck, this vein here. I don't want to fuck Christine Dawson, I don't want my mother's love, I don't want to work at the engineering firm, I want the neck, this vein here. (Practises.) Tactics, new techniques. What does he think? What do you think? (Strikes.) The neck and that's that. He thought, you thought, the neck and that is that. Now I've told you about the three things you need to get to the experience of the tingle. One fitness, told you. Two, tactics, told you. Three, new techniques, I told you. Now I'll tell you about the tingle. Well it's...You can't say it can you?...It'll come when you're fighting. Sometimes in the middle, sometime beginning, sometime end, but it won't stay...it's like you are there, you are fighting, but 'you' are not there...(Pause.) You don't understand. (Pause.) Anyway, once you've had it, you need it, and I thought that's all there was until that night, right, should I tell you about that night? No. I'll show you. (He leaps back on stage.) I came out the disco, last man to leave, all my lads had gone. I'd been talking to Mickey Isherwood the bouncer. 'See you Jim.' 'Aye, see you Ishey.' Then I saw them. Skins. Bolton boot boys. Skinheads. Some sitting on the wall. Some standing. I moved off to the right. 'Eh, cunty.' 'Eh, git head.' 'Come 'ere.' I looked at the moon. I heard the crack of denim, the scuffle down the wall, the pad and fall of the Dr Martins, pad, pad, pad. I closed my eyes. Pad, pad. As they moved in, pad, pad, I moved out. Pad, pad. I felt their breath...(Loud cry.) KIYAA!...lifted one man by the chin...can you imagine it? Magnificent ... they were scattering. Caught one man between thigh and calf, took him round to the ground, fingers up the nose dragged a pace, nutted, lifted my fingers to pierce out his eyes when to my surprise I saw a figure watching, like a ghost, all pale in the night. Seemed like I'd known him all my life. He was laughing at me. Mocking my whole fucking life. I sprang, when I arrived he'd gone. Too quick for me. No, I saw him disappear down a blind alley. I had him now. I had him now! He was facing the wall in a sort of peeing position. I moved in to strike, my fist was like a golden orb in the wet night, I said it was night, I struck deep and dangerous and beautiful with a twist of the fist on the out. But he was only smiling, and he opened his eyes to me like two diamonds in the night. I said it was night, and said 'Over to you Buddha'. (Pause.) So now I just read the dharma. And when men at work pass the pornography, I pass it on and continue with the dharma. And when my mother makes egg and bacon and chips for me I push it away towards the slat cellar and read of the dharma. And when the man on the bus push I continue with the dharma.

14. RHINOCEROS by Eugene Ionesco -

BERENGER

I'm not good-looking, I'm not good-looking. (He takes down the pictures, throws them furiously to the ground, and goes over to the mirror) They're the good-looking ones. I was wrong! Oh, how I wish I was like them! I haven't got any horns, more's the pity! A smooth brow looks so ugly. I need one or two horns to give my sagging face a lift. Perhaps one will grow and I needn't be ashamed anymore - then I could go and join them. But it will never grow! (He looks at the palms of his hands) My hands are so limp - oh, why won't they get rough! (He takes his coat off, undoes his shirt to look at his chest in the mirror) My skin is so slack. I can't stand this white, hairy body. Oh I'd love to have a hard skin in that wonderful dull green colour - a skin that looks decent naked without any hair on it, like theirs! (He listens to the trumpeting) Their song is charming - a bit raucous perhaps, but it does have charm! I wish I could do it! (He tries to imitate them) Ahh, Ahh, Brr! No, that's not it! Try again, louder! Ahh, Ahh, Brr! No, that's not it, it's too feeble, it's got no drive behind it. I'm not trumpeting at all; I'm just howling. Ahh, Ahh, Brr! There's a big difference between howling and trumpeting. I've only myself to blame; I should have gone with them while there was still time. Now it's too late! Now I'm a monster, just a monster. Now I'll never become a rhinoceros, never, never! I'm gone past changing. I want to, I really do, but I can't, I just can't. I can't stand the sight of me. I'm too ashamed! (He turns his back on the mirror) I'm so ugly! People who try to hang onto their individuality always come to a bad end! (He suddenly snaps out of it) Oh well, too bad! I'll take on the whole of them! I'll put up a fight against the lot of them, the whole lot of them! I'm the last man left, and I'm staying that way until the end. I'm not capitulating!

15. THE PILLOWMAN by Martin McDonagh -

ARIEL

Well, y'know, I'll tell you what there is about me. There is an overwhelming, and there is an all-pervading, hatred . . . a hatred . . . of people like you. Of people who lay even the littlest finger . . . on children. I wake up with it. It wakes me up. It rides on the bus with me to work. It whispers to me, "They will not get away with it." I come in early. I make sure all the bindings are clean and the electrodes are in the right order so we won't . . . waste . . . time. I admit, sometimes I use excessive force. And sometimes I use excessive force on an entirely innocent individual. But I'll tell you this. If an entirely innocent individual leaves this room for the outside world, they're not gonna contemplate even raising their voice to a little kid again, just in case I hear'em and drag'em in here for another load of excessive force. Now, is this kind of behavior in an officer of the law in some way questionable morally? Of course it is! But you know what? I don't care! 'Cos, when I'm an old man, you know what? Little kids are gonna follow me around and they're gonna know my name and what I stood for, and they're gonna give me some of their sweets in thanks, and I'm gonna take those sweets and thank them and tell them to get home safe, and I'm gonna be happy. Not because of the sweets, I don't really like sweets, but because I'd know . . . I'd know in my heart, that if I hadn't been there, not all of them would have been there. Because I'm a good policeman. Not necessarily good in the sense of being able to solve lots of stuff, because I'm not, but good in the sense of I stand for something. I stand for something. I stand on the right side. The child's side. The opposite side to you. And so, naturally when I hear that a child has been killed in a fashion . . . in a fashion such as this . . . You know what? I would torture you to death just for writing a story like that, let alone acting it out! 'Cos two wrongs do not make a right. Two wrongs do not make a right. So kneel down over here, please, so I can connect you to this battery.

16. THE GLASS MENAGERIE by Tennessee Williams -

TOM

I didn't go to the moon, I went much further - for time is the longest distance between two places. Not long after that I was fired for writing a poem on the lid of a shoe-box. I left Saint Louis. I descended the steps of this fire escape for a last time and followed, from then on, in my father's footsteps, attempting to find in motion what was lost in space. I travelled around a great deal. The cities swept about me like dead leaves, leaves that were brightly colored but torn away from the branches. I would have stopped, but I was pursued by something. It always came upon me unawares, taking me altogether by surprise. Perhaps it was a familiar bit of music. Perhaps it was only a piece of transparent glass. Perhaps I am walking along a street at night, in some strange city, before I have found companions. I pass the lighted window of a shop where perfume is sold. The window is filled with pieces of colored glass, tiny transparent bottles in delicate colors, like bits of a shattered rainbow. Then all at once my sister touches my shoulder. I turn around and look into her eyes. Oh, Laura, Laura, I tried to leave you behind me, but I am more faithful than I intended to be! I reach for a cigarette, I cross the street, I run into the movies or a bar, I buy a drink, I speak to the nearest stranger - anything that can blow your candles out! For nowadays the world is lit by lightning! Blow out your candles, Laura - and so goodbye...

17. THE HOMECOMING by Harold Pinter -

LENNY

I mean, I am very sensitive to atmosphere, but I tend to get desensitized, if you know what I mean, when people make unreasonable demands on me. For instance, last Christmas I decided to do a bit of snow-clearing for the Borough Council. I didn't have to do this snow-clearing - I mean I wasn't financially embarrassed in any way - it just appealed to me, it appealed to something inside me. What I anticipated was a good deal the brisk cold bite in the air in the early morning. And I was right. I had to get my snow boots on and I had to stand on a corner, at about five-thirty in the morning, to wait for the lorry to pick me up, to take me to the allotted area. Bloody freezing. Well, the lorry came, I jumped on the tailboard, headlights on, dipped, and off we went. Well, that morning, while I was having my mid-morning cup of tea in a neighbourhood café, the shovel standing by my chair, an old lady approached me and asked if I would give her a hand with her iron mangle. Her brother-in-law, she said, had left it for her, but he'd left it in the wrong room, he'd left it in the front room. Well, naturally, she wanted it in the back room. So I took off to give her a hand. She only lived up the road. Well, the only trouble was when I got there I couldn't move this mangle. It must have weighed about half a ton. So there I was, doing a bit of shoulders on with the mangle, risking a rupture, and this old lady just standing there, waving me on, not even lifting a little finger to give me a helping hand. So after a few minutes I said to her, now look here, why don't you stuff this iron mangle up your arse? Anyway, I said, they're out of date, you want to get a spin dryer. I had a good mind to give her a work over there and then, but as I was feeling jubilant with the snow clearing, I just gave her a short-arm jab to the belly and jumped on the bus outside. Excuse me, shall I take this ashtray out of your way?

18. ACCIDENTAL DEATH OF AN ANARCHIST by Dario Fo –

MANIAC

N wonder he jumped. No seriously, Inspector, seriously. You see all this jocular banter explains a great deal that has often worried me. For instance, I was holidaying in Bergamo a couple of summers back during the time of the notorious 'Monday Gang' affair, if you recall? Practically everyone in the village was under arrest, the café proprietor, the doctor, even the priest; (*in nomine, spiritu sancti*, you're nicked); of course in the end they all turned out to be innocent. Still, my hotel, you see, was right next to the police station and I simply could not get a wink of sleep the whole time I was there for the shrieks and screams and slappings and loud thuds. Naturally, I assumed as any citizen who reads the papers and watches TBV would, that these were the sounds of suspects being beaten under interrogation by brutal country coppers. All too clearly now I can see how mistaken my impressions were. Those shrieks I heard were shrieks of laughter, the screams were screams of merriment and mirth accompanied by thigh slapping convulsions of humorous hysteria:

Thrashed about laughing and miming being beaten.

'Hahahaha! Jeeesus! No! That's enough! I've heard that one before. Help! Haha, no more! I love a party. Don't you?' I can see it all. The wackey, witty *carabinieri*. Those southerners... what jokers ...sending their suspects spinning across the floor in fits of fun, smashing their heads on the tiles at the side-splitting japes: *Does somersault as result of imaginary blow in stomach.* 'Ha, stop it! Ha ha! No! Please! Mercy! I can't take any more!' This explains why so many perfectly ordinary, bored people suddenly dress themselves up as anarchists and revolutionaries – they are completely innocent, they just want to get themselves arrested so they can have a fucking good laugh for once in their lives. Our cunning anarchist is obviously in his grave right now, pissing himself!

19. THE WINTER'S TALE (ACT 1, SCENE 2) by William Shakespeare -

LEONTES

Gone already!

Inch-thick, knee-deep, o'er head and ears a fork'd one!

Go, play, boy, play: thy mother plays, and I

Play too, but so disgraced a part, whose issue

Will hiss me to my grave: contempt and clamour

Will be my knell. Go, play, boy, play.

There have been,

Or I am much deceived, cuckolds ere now;

And many a man there is, even at this present,

Now while I speak this, holds his wife by the arm,

That little thinks she has been sluiced in's absence

And his pond fish'd by his next neighbour, by

Sir Smile, his neighbour: nay, there's comfort in't

Whiles other men have gates and those gates open'd,

As mine, against their will. Should all despair

That have revolted wives, the tenth of mankind

Would hang themselves. Physic for't there is none;

It is a bawdy planet, that will strike

Where 'tis predominant; and 'tis powerful, think it,

From east, west, north and south: be it concluded,

No barricado for a belly; know't;

It will let in and out the enemy

With bag and baggage: many thousand on's

Have the disease, and feel't not. How now, boy!

20. CRAVE by Sarah Kane -

A

And I want to play hide-and-seek and give you my clothes and tell you I like your shoes and sit on the steps while you take a bath and massage your neck and kiss your feet and hold your hand and go for a meal and not mind when you eat my food and meet you at Rudy's and talk about the day and type up your letters and carry your boxes and laugh at your paranoia and give you tapes you don't listen to and watch great films and watch terrible films and complain about the radio and take pictures of you when you're sleeping and get up to fetch you coffee and bagels and Danish and go to Florence and drink coffee at midnight and have you steal my cigarettes and never be able to find a match and tell you about the tv programme I saw the night before and take you to the eye hospital and not laugh at your jokes and want you in the morning but let you sleep for a while and kiss your back and stroke your skin and tell you how much I love your hair your eyes your lips your neck your breasts your arse your and sit on the steps smoking till your neighbour comes home and sit on the steps smoking till you come home and worry when you're late and be amazed when you're early and give you sunflowers and go to your party and dance till I'm black and be sorry when I'm wrong and happy when you forgive me and look at your photos and wish I'd known you forever and hear your voice in my ear and feel your skin on my skin and get scared when you're angry and tell you you're gorgeous and hug you when you're anxious and hold you when you hurt and want you when I smell you and offend you when I touch you and whimper when I'm next to you and whimper when I'm not and smother you in the night and get cold when you take the blanket and hot when you don't and melt when you smile and dissolve when you laugh and have a feeling so deep I can't find words for it and want to buy you a kitten I'd get jealous of because it would get more attention than me and keep you in bed when you have to go and cry like a baby when you finally do and get rid of the roaches and buy you presents you don't want and take them away again and ask you to marry me and you say no again but keep on asking because though you think I don't mean it I do always have from the first time I asked you and wander the city thinking it's empty without you and want want you want and think I'm losing myself but know I'm safe with you and tell you the worst of me and think it's all over but hang on in for just ten more minutes before you throw me out of your life and forget who I am and try to get closer to you and make love with you at three in the morning and somehow somehow somehow communicate some of the overwhelming undying overpowering unconditional all-encompassing heart-enriching mind-expanding on-going never-ending love I have for you.

21. TWO by Jim Cartwright

MOTH You're beautiful you. You're absolutely beautiful you. Look at you. You're fantastic you. I love you. I love the bones of you. I do. You think it's too quick don't you. But you can't see yourself. You're just ... I'm in love with you, I'm. It joking. I've seen some women, but you. Let's get back to what you are, beautiful. Did you just smile then. Or did someone turn the lights on? You are beautiful you. You stand for beauty. You sit for it too. Look how you sit you, like a glamour model that's how. You ... You're quiet though, but I love that in a girl, love that, don't get me wrong. You're beauty you. Beauty itself. Beauty is you. You're marvellous as well as being beautiful too, you. Yes, too good for this place I'll tell you that. What's a beautiful girl like you doing in a place like this, or whatever they say, is that what they say, who cares, who cares now, eh? You are a star, and you don't even know it. A star before you start. Everything about you'd, just ... You are it. The beauty of all times. You're just beautiful and that's it! Done, finished, it. Because you are the most beautiful thing ever brought to this earth. And you're for me you. You are for me. There's no bones about it, none! Here's the back of my hand, here, here. And here's the pen, number, number please, number, before I stop breathing.

22. THINGS I KNOW TO BE TRUE by Andrew Bovell

MARK

On the weekends when Dad wanted help in the garden I would climb the gum tree and hide. From up there, I could see the world. At least I could see our world. Pip singing to a song on the radio and checking her split ends at the patio table. Ben kicking the football from one end of the yard to the other. Always running. Dad pushing a wheelbarrow of dirt around with Rosie following him with her plastic shovel ready to help. And Mum hanging out the washing before sneaking a cheeky fag behind the shed, thinking that no one knows she's there. They didn't know I was up in the tree watching and seeing everything. Not really a part of the picture and not really even knowing why. There were two occasions on which Mum would smoke. The first was if she'd had more than two glasses of wine. She wasn't a big drinker so this was rare. It usually happened on New Year's Eve. She would light up after two glasses of sparkling wine and only ever smoke the one. She was also known to dance with Dad's undies on her head, after he had taken them off for God knows what reason, so New Year's Eve was always an ordeal for us kids. The other occasion was when she thought that one of us had a problem that she couldn't solve, which was also rare. Mum having a solution for most problems in life. And on these occasions she could go through a pack, one after the another until a solution was found. I suspect that of all of us, she smoked the most cigarettes on account of me.

23. THINGS I KNOW TO BE TRUE by Andrew Bovell

MARK

I hear the sound of the horn and I know that it's time to go. I wish it was a taxi and that goodbyes were over but Dad insisted on taking me to the airport. Rosie comes too, of course. She's at the wheel. Dad is in the front passenger seat. So I sit in the back, which makes me feel like a child again, which I resent a little. Dad wants Rosie to take the coast road. She insists on taking the expressway. There is a kind of useless argument. A stand-off, that you would only tolerate with members of your own family. Rosie wins. She can be surprisingly stubborn. So we take the expressway only to discover that there are roadworks in progress so it takes longer than usual and Dad gets this 'I told you so' look on his face. And Rosie is reduced to a silent kind of rage. And I'm sitting in the back seat looking out the window thinking just how ugly the road to the airport is.

Mum is not with us. She's at work. We have hardly spoken. Our farewell was brief and hard. We both tried to outdo each other with an 'I am Still Angry With You' face. But she won. She always wins that game. But I feel the strength in her final quick embrace before she turned away and I thought it's going to be okay with her. That one day she will soften. One day she may even want to get to know...Her.

I want them to drop me at the airport and keep going. I want this goodbye to be over. I beg Rosie with my eyes. She gets it but airport farewells are still a big deal for Dad and he insists on coming inside and walking me to the gate. There is mayhem at security as he sets off the alarms. How a man can have so many pieces of metal on his person is a mystery to me but given that my time as a man is finite it's not a mystery I need to give much further thought to.

At the gate I tell my Dad that I will come home soon to visit. And he tells me that he'll come to see me in Sydney as soon as I have settled in. Both of us know that neither of these things will happen but pretending they will seem to make the parting easier. I linger in his embrace knowing that it will be the last time I will be held by him, as a man and then he does something that takes my breath away. He kisses me on the lips. And it almost does me in. It is so intimate. And I have never loved him more.

And I look back from the gate and he has broken. He is weeping. Rosie is holding him. She has him. I have to look away. I have to look ahead. I have to keep walking. My father's grief is the price I am prepared to pay.

The plane turns down the runway, increases its speed, lifts off the ground and as it makes its ascent I look down upon the city where I grew up, and steel myself against memories, against history and against the man I was. By the time I land in Sydney, Mark Price will just be someone I used to know.

24. EQUUS by Peter Shaffer

ALAN

That's what you want to know, isn't it? All right: it was. I'm talking about the beach. That time when I was a kid. What I told you about... I was pushed forward on the horse. There was sweat on my legs from his neck. The fellow held me tight, and let me turn the horse which way I wanted. All that power going any way you wanted... His sides were all warm, and the smell... Then suddenly I was on the ground, where Dad pulled me. I could have bashed him... (Pause.) Something else. When the horse first appeared, I looked up into his mouth. It was huge. There was this chain on it. The fellow pulled it, and the cram dripped out. I said "does it hurt?" And he said—the horse said—said—"Desperately." It was always the same, after that, Every time I heard one clop by, I had to run and see. Up a country lane or anywhere. They sort of pulled me. I couldn't take my eyes off them. Just to watch their skins. The way their necks twist, and sweat shines on the folds... (Pause.) I can't remember when it started. Mum reading to me about Prince who no one could ride, except one boy. Or the white horse in Revelations. "He who sat upon him as called Faithful and True. His eyes were as flames of fire, and he had a name written that no man knew but himself"... Words like reins. Stirrup. Flanks... "Dashing his spurs against his charger's flanks!" Even the words made me feel...(pause) The way they give themselves to us. That was it, too. They could stamp us into bits anytime they wanted, and they don't. They just trot on and let themselves be turned on a string all day, absolutely humble. They give us all their breath and we just give them stripes for it. (Pause) I couldn't help myself. I'd watch any horse without stop. The way they turned and turned, and their ribs grew wet just for our sakes... (Pause). Years I never told anyone. Mum wouldn't understand. She likes "Equitation". Bowler hats and jodhpurs! "My grandfather dressed for the horse" she says. What does that mean? The horse isn't dressed. It's the most naked thing you ever saw! More than a dog or a cat or anything. Even the most broken down nag has got its life! To put a bowler on it is *filthy*. ...Putting them through their paces! Bloody horse shows! ...No one understands! Except cowboys. They do. I wish I was a cowboy. They're free. They just swing up and then it's miles of grass. I bet all cowboys are *orphans*! ... I bet they are!

25. A WOMAN OF NO IMPORTANCE by Oscar Wilde

GERALD

Mother, how changeable you are! You don't seem to know your own mind for a single moment. An hour and a half ago in the Drawing-room you agreed to the whole thing; now you turn round and make objections, and try to force me to give up my one chance in life. Yes, my one chance. You don't suppose that men like Lord Illingworth are to be found every day, do you, mother? It is very strange that when I have had such a wonderful piece of good luck, the one person to put difficulties in my way should be my own mother. Besides, you know, mother, I love Hester Worsley. Who could help loving her? I love her more than I have ever told you, far more. And if I had a position, if I had prospects, I could - I could ask her to - Don't you understand now, mother, what it means to me to be Lord Illingworth's secretary? To start like that is to find a career ready for one - before one - waiting for one. If I were Lord Illingworth's secretary I could ask Hester to be my wife. As a wretched bank clerk with a hundred a year it would be an impertinence. Then I have my ambition left, at any rate. That is something - I am glad I have that! You have always tried to crush my ambition, mother - haven't you? You have told me that the world is a wicked place, that success is not worth having, that society is shallow, and all that sort of thing - well, I don't believe it, mother. I think the world must be delightful. I think society must be exquisite. I think success is a thing worth having. You have been wrong in all that you taught me, mother, quite wrong. Lord Illingworth is a successful man. He is a fashionable man. He is a man who lives in the world and for it. Well, I would give anything to be just like Lord Illingworth.

26. FAT PIG by Neil Labute

TOM I'm weak. That's what I basically learned from our time together. I am a weak person, and I don't know if I can overcome that. No, maybe I do know. Yeah. I do know that I am, and I can't... overcome it, I mean. I think you are an amazing woman, I honestly do. And I really love what we've had here. Our time together... But I think that we're very different people. Not just who we are- jobs or that kind of thing- but it does play into it as well. Factors in. We probably should've realized this earlier, but I've been so happy being near you that I just sorta overlooked it and went on. I did. But I feel it coming up now, more and more, and I just think- No, that's bullshit, actually, the whole work thing. Forget it. (Beat.) I'm just, I feel that we should maybe stop before we get too far. It's weird to say this, because in many ways I'm already in so deep. Care about you a lot, and that makes it super hard. But- I guess I do care what my peers think about me. Or how they view my choices and, yes, maybe that makes me not very deep, or petty, or some other word, hell, I don't know! It's my Achilles flaw or something. It doesn't matter. What I'm sure of is this- we need to stop. Stop seeing each other or going out or anything like that. Because I know now how weak I am and that I'm not really deserving of you, of all you have to offer me. I can see that now. Helen... things are so tricky, life is. I want to be better... to do good and better things and to make a proper sort of decision here, but I... I can't.

27. THE GLASS MENAGERIE by Tennessee Williams

TOM I didn't go to the moon. I went much further—for time is the longest distance between two places. Not long after that I was fired for writing a poem on the lid of a shoebox. I left St. Louis. I descended the steps of the fire escape for a last time and followed, from then on, in my father's footsteps, attempting to find in motion what was lost in space. I travelled around a great deal. The cities swept about me like dead leaves, leaves that were brightly coloured but torn away from their branches. I would have stopped, but I was pursued by something. It always came upon me unawares, taking me altogether by surprise. Perhaps it was a familiar bit of music. Perhaps it was only a piece of transparent glass. Perhaps I am walking along a street at night, in some strange city, before I have found companions. I pass the lighted window of a shop where perfume is sold. The window is filled with pieces of coloured glass, tiny transparent bottles in delicate colours, like bits of a shattered rainbow. Then all at once my sister touches my shoulder. I turn around and look into her eyes. Oh Laura, Laura, I tried to leave you behind me, but I am more faithful than I intended to be! I reach for a cigarette, I cross the street, I run into the movies or a bar, I buy a drink, I speak to the nearest stranger—anything that can blow your candles out! For nowadays the world is lit by lightning! Blow out your candles, Laura – and so goodbye...

28. DEATH OF A SALESMAN by Arthur Miller

BIFF Now hear this, Willy, this is me. You know why I had no address for three months? I stole a suit in Kansas City and I was jailed. I stole myself out of every good job since high school. And I never got anywhere because you blew me so full of hot air I could never stand taking orders from anybody! That's whose fault it is! It's goddamn time you heard that! I had to be boss big shot in two weeks, and I'm through with it! Willy! I ran down eleven flights with a pen in my hand today. And suddenly I stopped, you hear me? And in the middle of that office building, do you hear this? I stopped in the middle of that building and I saw- the sky. I saw the things that I love in the world. The work and the food and the time to sit and smoke. And I looked at the pen and said to myself, what the hell am I grabbing this for? Why am I trying to become what I don't want to be? What am I doing in an office, making a contemptuous, begging fool of myself, when all I want is out there, waiting for me the minute I say I know who I am! Why can't I say that, Willy? Pop! I'm a dime a dozen, and so are you! I am not a leader of me, Willy, and neither are you. You were never anything but a hard-working drummer who landed in the ash-can like all the rest of them! I'm a dollar an hour, Willy! I tried seven states and couldn't raise it! A buck an hour! Do you gather my meaning? I'm not bringing home any prizes any more, and you're going to stop waiting for me to bring them home! Pop, I'm nothing! I'm nothing, Pop. Can't you understand that? There's no spite in it any more. I'm just what I am, that's all. Will you let me go, for Christ's sake? Will you take that phoney dream and burn it before something happens?

29. A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM by William Shakespeare**PUCK**

My mistress with a monster is in love.
Near to her close and consecrated bower,
While she was in her dull and sleeping hour,
A crew of patches, rude mechanicals,
That work for bread upon Athenian stalls,
Were met together to rehearse a play
Intended for great Theseus' nuptial-day.
The shallowest thick-skin of that barren sort,
Who Pyramus presented, in their sport
Forsook his scene and enter'd in a brake
When I did him at this advantage take,
An ass's noll I fixed on his head:
Anon his Thisbe must be answered,
And forth my mimic comes. When they him spy,
As wild geese that the creeping fowler eye,
Or russet-pated choughs, many in sort,
Rising and cawing at the gun's report,
Sever themselves and madly sweep the sky,
So, at his sight, away his fellows fly;
And, at our stamp, here o'er and o'er one falls;
He murder cries and help from Athens calls.
Their sense thus weak, lost with their fears
thus strong,
Made senseless things begin to do them wrong;
For briers and thorns at their apparel snatch;
Some sleeves, some hats, from yielders all
things catch.
I led them on in this distracted fear,
And left sweet Pyramus translated there:
When in that moment, so it came to pass,
Titania waked and straightway loved an ass.

30. GOODBYE CHARLES by Gabriel Davis

CHARLES

I'm sorry to interrupt your date, Barbara. (to Date) Hi buddy, how's your date with my girlfriend going so far? Good? (In response to Barbara) I asked Trish. She told me you were here. (to Date) You don't mind if I sit down, do you? Thanks. (to Barb) Listen, honey...I can explain my absence for the last three months, really. I can. See. You're the most beautiful woman I have ever known. And that can be a little...scary. Look at this guy, he looks petrified. You know how three months ago, I kinda ran out on you at dinner? Of course you do. I wasn't being rude; I was being scared shitless. See, I wanted to, kinda tell you something extremely important. But I choked. Big time.

(beat)

I went home and, I cried, I wept uncontrollably, Barbara. Now that's not like me, I'm not a weeper. But there I am, reduced to whimpers, because I don't have the guts to tell you that I want you to ... so I turn on the TV, it happens there's this documentary about these guys who climbed mount Everest. (to Date) Oh, you've seen it, buddy? (Back to Barb) So, I start thinking how brave these guys are, and why can't I be more like them.

(beat)

I mean those mountain men have stared death in the face, no way they would have been so anxious to ask if you ... See, then it occurred to me: I should climb Everest. If I climb Everest, little things like this, they'll be a cake walk. I know, I shoulda told you. But I just...went.

(beat)

The next thing I know, I'm trapped in a nylon tent at 25,000 ft. with a mountaineer named Gus. Winds over 100 mph are tossing grapefruit sized rocks and sheets of ice bigger than manhole covers though the air. All I can think about is you. I keep rehearsing this moment in my head, over and over...

(beat)

Every hour, Gus or I have to bundle up in our summit gear, crawl from the tent and shovel the snow into the screaming wind. If we don't, the snow will bury us, seal off the last bit of fresh air and slowly asphyxiate us. I keep thinking of this moment, with you. And in my head, this moment, it's not getting any easier. Somehow Gus and I manage to survive. Four days and the storm passes. We continue to the summit. The highest point on earth.

(beat)

At the top, it's breathtaking. You can see what seems endlessly in every direction, and there's this sense of being a God. I even made Gus call me Zeus. Then, staring out over my kingdom, I had this incredible, life altering revelation: There is nothing on earth more frightening, than a beautiful woman.

(beat)

I have looked death in the face Barb. Just like those guys in the documentary. And I have to say. Looking you in the face. Asking you what I'm about to... It's still harder. Barb, Barbara my dear, my love. (takes a breath in) Here we go.

(beat)

Will you marry me?