

Wasted

Kate Tempest was born in London in 1985. Her work includes the plays *Wasted*, *Glasshouse* and *Hopelessly Devoted*; the poetry collections *Everything Speaks in its Own Way* and *Hold Your Own*; the albums *Everybody Down*, *Balance* and *Let Them Eat Chaos*; the long poems *Brand New Ancients* and *Let Them Eat Chaos*; and her debut novel, *The Bricks that Built the Houses*.

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Wasted

KATE TEMPEST
With commentary and notes by
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and Chris Megson



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Contents

Chronology and Significant Historical Events vi

Context: History, Society, Politics 1

Form and Genre 7

Hip hop 7

Verse drama 8

Realism/naturalism 10

Themes 13

Loss 13

Neoliberalism 14

Youth culture 15

First Production 16

Notes 19

Further Exploration 21

Works by Kate Tempest 21

On Kate Tempest 21

On hip hop 21

On realism/naturalism 22

On gentrification 22

Wasted 25

Notes 80

Chronology and Significant Historical Events

The timeline below maps an account of national and world events that surround the first performance of *Wasted*. As we will see in the CONTEXT section of this introduction, these seemingly unrelated events converge in the play in a variety of ways.

1973 11th August: Hip hop culture officially begins when teenager Clive Campbell performs as ‘DJ Kool Herc’ at a Back to School Party, ~~which is thrown for his sister Cindy’s birthday~~ in the recreation rooms at 1520 Sedgwick Avenue, an apartment complex in the Bronx, New York. Using two turntables to play the same record, he innovates with a technique he has perfected over the preceding months, creating extended instrumental breaks so that partygoers can dance for longer. According to hip hop legend, his friend, Coke La Rock, hypes up the crowd by rhyming over instrumentals. Three of the four ‘pillars’ or ‘elements’ of hip hop culture: DJing, MCing (rhyming over music) and break-dancing (dancing in the instrumental breaks of song) are in action that evening. The fourth pillar of hip hop, graffiti, emerges around the same period. During the 1970s, graffiti, often in the form of ‘tags’ (marks indicating the creator) is seen across public spaces in inner city New York. Often it covers the interior and exterior of subway cars that travel all over the city. In *New York: A Documentary Film*, cultural critic Marshall Berman describes how the subway trains provided a means through which those from the impoverished neighbourhood of the Bronx were able to communicate with those in more affluent areas. As he argues, graffiti was ‘the earliest form in which most people who weren’t part of that neighbourhood’ came to understand what was happening there. Scholars who write about hip hop often argue that there are not

four, but five elements; depending on who you consult, the fifth element is either 'knowledge' or 'style'.

- 1979 4th May: Margaret Thatcher becomes Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, having served as Leader of the Opposition from 1975. Her leadership is characterized by fiscal conservatism, economic reliance on the free-market, privatization of state-owned industry, hostility towards trade unions and scaling back the welfare state. So-called 'Thatcherite' politics, following the model of 'Reaganomics' introduced by US President Ronald Reagan, with whom Thatcher was closely allied, marks the UK's move towards neoliberalism as an economic model (please see the THEMES section for a discussion and explanation of the term 'neoliberalism').
- December: The hip hop record 'Rapper's Delight' by New Jersey's the Sugarhill Gang reaches number three in the UK singles chart, marking the first mainstream success for hip hop in the United Kingdom.
- 1982 December: The first British hip hop record, 'Christmas Rapping' by the artist Dizzy Heights, released by Polydor Records, reaches number 49 in the UK singles chart, following a surge of underground and self-released hip hop music. Popular British artists, including Adam and the Ants, The Clash, Malcolm McLaren and Wham! also experiment with adopting hip hop techniques into their music throughout the early 1980s, demonstrating how hip hop is beginning to take root as part of popular culture in the UK.
- 1984 March: The Miner's Strike, a major industrial action staged by the National Union of Miners in response to the government's attempts to close British collieries, shuts down the UK's coal industry.

viii Chronology and Significant Historical Events

Thatcher attempts to quash the power of trade unions by opposing the strike. In June 1984 there is a violent clash between striking miners and the police at a coking plant in Rotherham, South Yorkshire – known as the ‘Battle of Orgreave’ the event sees thousands of police officers deployed, including mounted officers and police dogs, in an attempt to overwhelm the pickets. The strike is ruled illegal in September.

1985

3rd March: The Miner’s Strike officially ends. This marks a significant turning point in the culture and trajectory of the British working classes. The power of trade unions is severely weakened, and in the coming decades there is rapid deindustrialization. Opportunities for working-class people to find well-paid, secure jobs, with clearly defined benefits and prospects for promotion decrease, and there is an increase in unemployment, drug-abuse and social instability in former working-class strongholds. The sense of community and collectivity that has characterized the mid-twentieth-century working-class experience begins to fracture, as those able to participate in the neoliberal culture leave behind those who cannot. In a now famous speech delivered in 1987, Thatcher proudly champions the era of the individual, claiming that there is ‘no such thing as society’.

22nd December: Kate Esther Calvert is born in London. She adopts the stage and pen name Kate Tempest in the mid-2000s after performing for a number of years under the name ‘Excentral Tempest’. She is part of the so-called ‘millennial’ generation, a term used to describe those born between the early 1980s and the late 1990s who became adults in the new millennium. Despite a growth in progressive social movements resulting in increased rights for women, racial minorities and LGBT people, this group will face more financial instability than

previous generations and decreased social mobility, partly because of the introduction and escalation of University fees – meaning that they are less likely than their parents to move into a higher social class or income bracket than the one they were born into.

Tempest is raised in Lewisham, in the South East of London. The language, culture and geography of South East London runs through her work across music, plays, novels and poetry.

- 1988 The British hip hop crew London Posse release ‘Money Mad’, a seminal track that is often considered to mark the birth of uniquely British hip hop culture. The artists use their own London accents and don’t affect American-style voices as British rappers up to this point have often done. The track uses dub reggae (an electronic development of reggae music), giving it a distinctive sound that will come to distinguish British hip hop (and later the grime music that emerges from British hip hop, garage and jungle music influences) from US rap music.
- 1990 November: Margaret Thatcher resigns and John Major wins the leadership contest for the Conservative Party, succeeding her as Prime Minister. He goes on to win a general election in 1992.
- 1997 May: New Labour wins the general election and Tony Blair becomes Prime Minister. ‘New Labour’ is a rebranding of the Labour Party that signals a move away from its socialist roots. Blair’s leadership is marked by an embrace of the free-market neoliberal ideology that has now characterized British politics since Thatcher, although he makes some concessions to reinvigorating the welfare state, notably with investment in education and Child Benefit. He vows to eliminate class inequality through an expansion of the middle classes, and pursues a social inclusion agenda based on the idea of ‘equal opportunity’ for

x Chronology and Significant Historical Events

all members of society. Part of this vision includes an emphasis on urban regeneration as a response to economic disadvantage. Nonetheless, despite a period of optimism based on Blairite social-democratic policies, Britain's historic class divisions remain entrenched.

- 2001 11th September: A series of terrorist attacks on the USA using hijacked planes, most iconically bringing down the Twin Towers of the World Trade Centre in New York, marks a seismic shift in global politics and the trajectory of both the UK and the USA for the new millennium. George W. Bush, President of the United States, declares a 'war on terror' and the UK government, led by Blair, supports this initiative. The US and UK work in alliance to invade Afghanistan, where those held responsible for the attack were located.
- 2003 19th March: The US and UK launch an attack on Iraq, claiming that Iraq's leader, Saddam Hussein, is stockpiling weapons of mass destruction. The invasion goes ahead despite huge public resistance in the UK, including an anti-war march with the participation of an estimated one million citizens in London. When it is later discovered that Hussein's regime did not have the capacity to stockpile nuclear weapons, there is huge and growing public mistrust in the government.
- 2005 6th July: It is announced that London has won its bid to host the 2012 Olympics. This is a moment of huge celebration for the city. The opportunity amplifies Blair's vision for urban regeneration, and gives investors added incentive to put money towards urban development projects, particularly in run-down neighborhoods in east and south-east London, where the Olympics will be held.

- 7th July: There is a series of four coordinated terrorist attacks on London, carried out by Islamic fundamentalist suicide bombers who are British citizens. They leave behind videos claiming that the attack avenges atrocities carried out by the UK as part of the War on Terror. They detonate bombs on three tube trains and a bus, killing fifty-two people.
- 2007 June: Gordon Brown, former Chancellor of the Exchequer, succeeds Tony Blair as Prime Minister.
- 2008 15th September: Following a crisis in the sub-prime mortgage market, the bank Lehman Brothers collapses, signaling an economic crisis and a massive global recession, considered by many economists to be the worst since the Great Depression in the 1930s.
- 2010 May: ~~The Conservative Party, led by David Cameron, win the general election ending thirteen years of Labour rule.~~ The Cameron government introduce an ‘austerity’ programme, which seeks to reduce the UK’s deficit by curbing public spending and tax rises. During austerity, conditions for the poorest members of British society worsen: there is an increase in the use of food banks, which provide free essentials such as food and toiletries to those in extreme poverty, and in exploitative employment practices such as zero-hours contracts, where staff are counted as ‘employed’, but have no guarantee of work or a fixed income.
- 2011 15th July: The first performance of *Wasted* takes place at the Latitude Festival in Henham Park, Suffolk.
- 6th August: Following the killing of Mark Duggan, a 29-year-old Londoner by police on the 4th of August, riots break out across London and quickly spread to cities all over England, including Manchester, Birmingham, Liverpool and Nottingham. There is widespread arson and violence, and looting of

xii Chronology and Significant Historical Events

consumer goods. Despite Duggan's killing and the strain that austerity cuts are already putting on inner-city communities, the government and press unite to declare that the riots are politically unmotivated acts of feral, criminal violence. Tempest disagrees with the media narrative, suggesting the riots were indeed politically motivated:

Basically, it made sense to me I think because I'm a Londoner. It seemed absolutely logical to be honest. There was nothing about what happened then that was surprising. The narrative that was spun about it in the press was that it was this a-political consumption-like spasm, that's absolute fucking nonsense.

2011 also sees a wave of political movements across the globe including the 'Arab Spring' (a series of pro-democracy protests in countries including Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia and Syria), and Occupy Wall Street, an anti-capitalist occupation in New York (later adopted elsewhere in the world including in Amsterdam, Paris, London and Hong Kong).

2012

Summer: London hosts the Olympics. The slow regeneration of the city that has been happening since at least the New Labour urban development drive at the turn of the century continues apace. Investment in new building developments renders many of London's former working-class neighbourhoods almost completely unrecognizable.

Kate Tempest develops *Brand New Ancients*, an epic spoken word poem at the Battersea Arts Centre in London; in 2013 this work wins the Ted Hughes Award for innovation in poetry.

Context: History, Society, Politics

When we study plays it can be tempting to begin with explorations of plot and character: to think about the emotional arc of a story and how it connects with us on a human level. What it made us *feel*. *Wasted* is, of course, a human story, especially resonant in terms of its emphasis on loss and friendship. The play follows twenty-five-year-old south-east Londoners Ted, Danny and Charlotte on the ten-year anniversary of their friend Tony's death. As they deal with their grief and contemplate how life has progressed in the decade since Tony died, the trio face the limitations of their own happiness and, partying into the night, they try to work out what they might want from the future. The 'wasted' of the play's title refers both to the state of the characters' 'wasted' youth and potential, as well as to the fact that they are 'wasted' (inebriated on alcohol and drugs) by the end of the play.

Our emotional responses to characters and situations on stage are often deep and lasting. This means we might think about the emotional effects (that is how the performance makes us feel) as 'timeless'. In *Wasted* this timeless quality is evident in a number of central themes, particularly in its exploration of the transition between youth and adulthood, a universal experience that is often deeply unsettling and fraught with uncertainty and indecision. We can also see timeless elements in the play's treatment of grief and loss, and in the central unresolved love story between Charlotte and Danny.

However, although *Wasted* has aspects that we might consider timeless, it also speaks very clearly to the social, political and historical moment in which it was written and performed. With an understanding of history and contemporary politics, we can map local, national and global events onto the play in order to help us think about it in a more focussed, strategic way. Taking a step back like this – understanding the specifics of 'where, how and what' is on stage – can be a useful first step in the process of analysis, before we think about the meaning or emotional resonance of the work in general terms. Understanding context helps us to consider how performances work not only as entertainment, but as social

2 Wasted

and historical documents (situated in a specific time and place) that comment upon the world they are part of.

In the CHRONOLOGY section at the start of this volume I lay out a timeline with quite a detailed account of local, national and global events leading up to and following the first performance of *Wasted* in 2011. At first glance these may seem random in their selection. The evolution of hip hop in the Bronx, New York and its adoption into UK popular culture, the 1985 Miners' Strike, shifting political power in the UK, the birth of the millennial generation, the rise of neoliberalism, urban regeneration, the War on Terror, the England riots and the decision to stage the Olympics in London. But, as I indicate in the header of the CHRONOLOGY section, these historical events, ostensibly unrelated, converge in *Wasted* in numerous ways. Although they are not directly addressed, these events sit underneath the narrative, shaping the social conditions that make the play possible and providing contexts that we can use to interpret what happens on stage.

The chorus, for example, draws on oral traditions rooted in hip hop culture (see FORM AND GENRE section of this introduction). It uses the actors 'real' voices to confront issues of millennial crisis, drawing attention to the hopeless, resigned state of a youth who are worse off than their parents' generation, and have no means of changing their reality. As the actors narrate towards the end of Chorus One:

Two We realised,
One This is all there is.
Three There really isn't more.
One Staring down the barrel
Two Of an empty bottle
Three Asking it to give us
All More.¹

Earlier generations, for example the hippies of the 1960s, the punks of the 1970s and '80s, and the Free Party ravers of the 1990s demonstrated their dissatisfaction with the status quo through identifiable movements, characterized by distinct styles and politics. These youth cultures often expressed counter-cultural ideals and

acted directly and with urgency against prevailing social norms. What we see in *Wasted*, however, is a youth culture mired in a sense of hopelessness, with the characters unable to imagine or facilitate a life outside of the status quo. They are living in a bland, apolitical hedonism (chasing drink, drugs, romantic relationships, travel), and are ultimately trapped by work and the need to work. Interestingly this is even the case for Danny, who doesn't have a regular job, but is trying to 'make it' with his band. In Scene Three, he tells Ted he can't join Charlotte travelling because he is waiting for his big break ('we got this gig next week. You know, a big one. Might be some labels there.'²). Although it is suffocating him, the promise of commercial success proves too enticing to ignore.

The lack of an identifiable youth-driven politics in *Wasted* is perhaps symptomatic of a culture at large that has lost trust in political structures as a result of world events, exacerbated by an increasingly neoliberal environment. 9/11, and the resultant War on Terror (particularly the invasion of Iraq), and the 2008 financial crisis have deepened the sense both that politicians do not represent the interests of ordinary people, and that hoping for change is futile. This futility is suggested in the chorus (Chorus Two) as the actors stand on stage and tell the audience:

One Change coming!

Two Change coming!

One I swear we can change something.

Three We change nothing.

Two Change is puffing up its chest.

One Change is jumping to its death.

Three Change is running,

One Short of breath,

Two Change is falling

Three Change is calling on its people

Two Change's people are not talking

One Nothing changes.³

4 Wasted

The repeated refrain ‘change’ in this hip hop style oration evokes the iconic track ‘Changes’, by American rapper Tupac. The academic Chris Richardson details how Tupac’s lyrics might be read as a wail of despair that echoes out from the inner city, calling for help from those with the means to intervene.⁴ We might read Tempest’s chorus in the same way. Just as subway cars carried messages etched in graffiti from the Bronx into Manhattan,⁵ the chorus brings the conditions of working-class London to the theatre, a traditionally elite cultural space. Indeed, at the start of the play the chorus draw attention to the fact we are in a theatre, emphasizing the disjuncture between this elite cultural space and the lives depicted on stage. We might understand *Wasted* therefore as an attempt to reveal the conditions of those on the margins of society to those at the centre.

Throughout *Wasted* the characters struggle to ‘change’ – to break out of repetitive, soul-destroying routines. In many ways the play is a lamentation on the social order that sees working-class people relegated to the bottom of the pile. Although Ted, Charlotte and Danny are not traditional working-class, manual-labouring figures, they speak with local accents, and express their affiliation with those left out of mainstream culture through their words and actions. In Scene Two, for example, Charlotte, in her monologue to Tony, describes how she noticed a party of private school boys on a field trip as she travelled on a train into central London. She is struck by the stark difference between their lives and the lives of the children she teaches (presumably in south-east London). She describes how the boys from the private school spoke ‘beautifully’, looked healthy and easy in their own bodies; how they helped one another with algebra and French homework:

it didn’t seem fair. I thought of the kids here, in my class, with their squinty eyes and bad skin, mouths full of swear words and silence, and it didn’t seem fair. And I’m stood there and I feel like bursting into tears and telling them all to run out on the streets and smash windows or something, do something.⁶

In this speech (and later when Danny refers to not having been to university⁷) there is a bubbling class politics, which hints at the injustices that neoliberalism, with its focus on individual success, has

wrought on the working classes. Charlotte's call to her students to 'do something' is optimistically futile when we consider how attempts by the working-class to 'do something' about the conditions of their existence have played out in the recent past (for example, during the UK industrial strikes of the 1980s, which all but destroyed the strength of the trade unions), and the way that neoliberal politics and subsequent austerity measures have produced worsening conditions for the poorest in society.

Charlotte's statement is also prophetic. Three weeks after the first performance of *Wasted* in 2011 riots broke out in London and across England. These riots revealed simmering race and class tensions. The images and videos of the riots, documented in news media and still available on internet platforms such as YouTube, demonstrate exactly how disenfranchised youths took to the streets and smashed windows in an attempt to 'do something' about the unfairness of their lives. *Tempest's* ability to predict this event reveals how her writing is embedded in its social and historical context, reflecting the atmosphere of the world it represents.

Wasted takes place in a London that is rapidly undergoing transformation via urban development. Again, moments in the play that deal with this context point both to the specific period in which it was written, and predict changes that happen after the first performance. In Scene One, for example, Danny invites Ted to a party. Ted, sarcastically guessing what the party will be like, describes 'a warehouse in Peckham full of wannabe rude boys out to rob phones, and trendy fuckin' art students passed out in the corner experiencing Ketamine'.⁸ This description draws on tropes of what the sociologist Ruth Glass called 'gentrification'.⁹ Gentrification describes how formerly working-class neighbourhoods become fashionable, inhabited by artists and students before attracting developers who price out existing residents. Eventually, once working-class neighbourhoods become dominated by the middle classes, as poorer residents are displaced or forced elsewhere (a process that has accelerated in London since the 2012 Olympics, and has been called 'social cleansing'). The 'warehouse' Ted imagines the party taking place in is typical of the kind of trendy, pop-up social venues that began to spring up in areas like Peckham in the run up to the London Olympics. The term 'pop-up' refers to

6 Wasted

an enterprise such as a café, shop, restaurant, bar or club, that makes temporary, often creative, use of a disused urban building.¹⁰ These venues made Peckham and other districts that had previously been considered run-down (notably Hackney in East London) attractive to investors, who often built properties hoping to lure buyers seduced by the new nightlife and culture. Ted's animosity towards the 'warehouse' venue points to Tempest's cynicism for this kind of speculative investment; one that has changed the face of London in the years since *Wasted* was written. Indeed, this is a theme Tempest has returned to in later works. On the album *Let them Eat Chaos* (2016), for example, the song 'Perfect Coffee' describes the feeling of being alienated from your home environment in the wake of urban regeneration and investment that has destroyed everything familiar. The writer and performer Arinze Kene also explores the effects of gentrification in his play *Misty* (Bush Theatre 2018).¹¹

Despite the very human story at the heart of *Wasted* then, it is nonetheless a play that we can read contextually. By mapping significant political, cultural and historical events onto the world of the play we begin to understand how its contents emerge in conversation with the wider world. This allows us a better understanding both of the play itself and of the human impact of the events that contextualize it.

Form and Genre

In *Wasted*, Tempest juxtaposes two stylistic forms: the chorus and the realistic or ‘naturalistic’ scenes. In doing this, she plays with a number of contemporary and historical literary and performance techniques, including poetry, direct address to the audience, monologues and dramatic scenes with two or three characters.

What we call ‘form’ describes the elements that give shape to a play (or piece of literature or music) and, together with content, places it in a particular genre. The formal juxtapositions of *Wasted* mean the play sits across a number of genres (or categories), most significantly hip hop, verse drama and realism (or ‘naturalism’), discussed in more detail below. These elements work separately and together to create meaning, and connect the play to different contemporary and historical moments.

Hip hop

Kate Tempest is, first and foremost, a rapper. In an interview with me, she explained how **rap music** underpins all her writing. She is often referred to in newspapers and online reviews as a ‘spoken word artist’; however, Tempest explains that she only began performing at so-called ‘spoken word’ events as a way to make money from her lyrics: ‘I never defined myself [as a spoken word artist], and I never knew anyone else who I respected who defined themselves that way either.’

Choosing to define herself as a rapper, positioning her work clearly within the tradition of hip hop, is a political choice as well as a stylistic one. The term ‘spoken word’, as Conrad Murray, the director of the Battersea Arts Centre’s Beatbox academy has argued, decontextualizes rap from its social and political roots, sanitizing it for the kind of literary and cultural elite who attend events at theatres and art galleries.¹

8 Wasted

Hip hop is as much a cultural political movement as it is a popular commercial form: rooted in the experiences of those who are marginalized from society by virtue of their race and/or socio-economic status. Hip hop is deeply embedded in models of collective action and being together, or what hip hop practitioners call ‘oneness’.² The ‘cypher’ (or ‘cipher’), for example, demonstrates how this concept translates into practice: a cypher in hip hop is a circle in which a group of artists gather to share lyrics, dance moves or to jam together. Tempest explained to me that this form of sharing helps foster a commitment to what she calls ‘improvement’, a word that suggests both the way it encourages artistic development of the form itself, and the way the sharing-circle creates a vision for an improved world.

Appreciating Tempest’s background in hip hop becomes significant when thinking about the function of the chorus in *Wasted*. Here the rhyming, poetic lyrics serve as a means by which the actors, stripped of their individual characters epitomize ‘oneness’. (Note how the stage directions specify that during the Chorus actors are ‘*all and none of the characters*’, and that they should ‘*speak in their own accents*’.³)

The Chorus are a collective; it is only when they speak together that they can address the audience directly, with profound truths the characters cannot express. Juxtaposed with the realism of the preceding scenes, there is a sense that the chorus becomes holy – the ‘something real’ that the characters ‘long to touch’ (see Chorus Three).⁴ In this way the form offers us hope that we don’t find in the plot, as the chorus demonstrates the ‘different possibility for communication’ that the characters are unable to imagine for themselves.

Verse drama

The term ‘verse drama’ refers to plays that are written with a metrical rhythm (they often, but not always, rhyme). Famous historical examples include the blank (non-rhyming) verse of Ancient Greek theatre, and the Early Modern verse pioneered by Shakespeare, often presented in a metrical composition called

‘iambic pentameter’.⁵ It is tempting to think of hip hop and classical forms of verse drama as totally separate genres. This is because verse drama is associated with what we think of as ‘high’ cultural history, and often sits in elite cultural spheres that seem vastly removed from the contemporary street-level appeal of hip hop. But hip hop is, as theatre scholar Harry Elm writes, ‘a new form of cultural expression’ that ‘still retains, repeats, and revises the past as it pushes into the future’.⁶

Rapper and cultural critic Akala has argued that hip hop is actually closely connected to ancient and historical forms of oral storytelling, both in Europe and Africa. He points out the similarities between hip hop and Shakespeare in terms of poetic expression, experimental use of imagery and metre.⁷ Akala also notes how the oration style developed by the hip hop emcee or ‘rapper’, draws on West African traditions of oral storytelling rooted in the figure of the griot – who used song, poetry and music to comment upon society, and often level political criticism.⁸

Wasted plays with the hip hop tradition of calling on historical forms of expression. *Tempest*’s chorus, which as I argue above can be understood in terms of its hip hop context, also clearly draws on the ancient theatrical choral tradition. In Greek theatre, the chorus was a group of performers with no clear, distinctive individual identity, who commented upon the action of the play. As online writer Kris Haamer explains, the Greek chorus had a number of functions, including ‘creating a more meaningful connection between actor and audience’; allowing the playwright to create ‘literary complexity’; and controlling the tempo of the play in order to ‘prepare audiences for certain key moments in the storyline’.⁹

We see all three of these elements of the Greek chorus working through *Wasted*’s Chorus. The characters are introduced as a homogenous, ethereal group with no clear identity. They speak to the audience, acknowledging the theatrical construction by pointing out that this is a play, taking place in the theatre – as such we can read their subsequent statements as comments upon the play’s action. The rhythm and metaphors spoken by the chorus add literary complexity. The Chorus also changes the pace as we move between scenes: here *Tempest* is deftly controlling the audience experience,

10 Wasted

moving us into a state of thoughtful contemplation before the next ‘realist’ scene.

Tempest also calls on past theatrical traditions through the use of long monologues in each of the scenes, which have some parallels with the Shakespearean soliloquy. In these moments, although the characters do not speak with the sense of omnipotent ‘truth’ enabled by the Chorus, they do reveal elements of their inner lives that they are reluctant to show one another. The monologues are also not quite a direct address to the audience as Shakespearean soliloquies tend to be. Rather, they are delivered to Tony, the absent friend. In this way Tempest upholds the naturalistic world of the ‘scenes’, while exposing the fragility the characters find hard to share with one another.

Tempest’s playful juxtaposition of historical dramatic and contemporary forms is not limited to *Wasted*. Several of her other works, in various forms, particularly poetry, play with the ancient and the new in similar ways. In the epic performance poem *Brand New Ancients* (Battersea Arts Centre 2012), for example, Tempest brings the myths of the Greek Gods to contemporary London. By narrating the stories of ordinary Londoners’ lives within an overarching framework of the mythical, she imbues what we might first think of as mundane with a sense of the profound and holy. Her collection of poems, *Hold Your Own*, meanwhile, uses the character of Tiresias, a gender-shifting clairvoyant from Greek mythology, as a recurring figure who frames an exploration of contemporary culture.

Realism/naturalism

The terms ‘realism’ and ‘naturalism’ are often conflated. Certainly they are related – both are artistic movements that emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Both movements sought to present real life, in as accurate detail as possible, although naturalism was often more concerned with ‘environment’ than realism. As the theorist Raymond Williams writes, the ‘novelty’ of naturalism was ‘its demonstration of the *production* of character or action by a powerful natural or social environment’.¹⁰

In *Wasted* the opening stage directions, which are unusually detailed in their descriptions, suggest the way the characters are ‘produced’ by their social environments. We see, in turn, each of the characters in their workplaces (Ted in an office, Charlotte in the staffroom of a secondary school, Danny, whose job is as a part-time musician, is at the tail end of a party). The stage directions offer an exaggerated realism, where cardboard cut-outs stand in for fellow humans. Ted’s colleagues are described as ‘blown up, monstrous versions’ of themselves; Charlotte’s have ‘massive eyebrows, ears, lips’; Danny’s party-mates are similarly ‘monstrous’ and ‘massive’.¹¹ This exaggerated form highlights the characters’ sense of feeling alone and out of place in the world they inhabit. These soulless work environments frame the action of the subsequent scenes, as the characters reveal their dissatisfaction and misery. The importance of these work environments in conditioning the characters’ dissatisfaction is further emphasized at the end, when the opening motifs are repeated.

Each of the ‘Scenes’ in the play is presented in a realist dialogue. That is, the characters speak to one another in ways that are very similar to how people speak to one another in real life, and they are placed in recognizable social situations and environments. This realism suggests that the Scenes reflect ‘real life’, and also show us how the characters are trapped by their real lives, which are repetitive and mundane. We get a sense of this in the lead up to and at the party scene: the ‘wasted’ characters have been here before. So too, the opening and closing motifs suggest the characters’ endless and repetitive routines. As we are told in the Chorus, ‘nothing changes’.

This sense of changelessness shifts momentarily towards the end of *Wasted*, with Charlotte’s plans to break out of the routine of her life and travel the world. However, these plans are thwarted because she is ‘wasted’: even she cannot follow through with a life radically different to the one she is living now. When juxtaposed with the more hopeful Chorus the sense of the characters in the Scenes being stuck in a permanent, soulless cycle of work and partying has the effect of drawing attention to the limits of realism itself. As many scholars¹² have pointed out, realism, by replicating what already exists, fails to challenge dominant orthodoxies and

12 Wasted

structures (such as capitalism, sexism, racism and so on) that create social inequalities. Tempest's Chorus then is not only a direct comment on the Scenes in terms of its content, but also in terms of its form: the poetic oneness of the Chorus demonstrates how life for the characters could be different from the lives portrayed in the naturalistic Scenes, if they could break out of their conditioned behaviour.

Themes

Thinking through themes can enable us to think about how the plays we are studying operate *intertextually*: that is, how they connect with other plays, performances and works of literature. In *Wasted*, Tempest's hybrid approach to form and genre (that is, her mixing of different forms and genres) means her work, as we have already seen, resonates across historical periods and connects with a range of other artistic works, despite being very much a product of its specific moment.

Loss

The figure of Tony, the lost friend, is present throughout *Wasted*. Tony's absence tinges the action with poignancy, and serves as a constant reminder of the mortality of the other characters. Knowing that their lives too will end makes their 'wasted' states all the more pitiful, and the need to change even more urgent. The ever-presence of death in our lives is a theme that has been explored extensively in literature, drama and elsewhere. Think of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, in which the ghost of Hamlet's father haunts the play. His mother's warning to him in Act One, Scene Two, when she tells him to stop grieving his father, and reminds him that 'All that lives must die', imbues that play with a similar sense of the 'waste' that can come from dwelling in loss.

Hip hop too often deals with loss, particularly with the loss of friends gone too soon. In the popular 1997 release 'I'll be Missing You', for example, Faith Evans and Puff Daddy (subsequently known as P. Diddy, Diddy and Puffy) commemorate their lost friend, the rapper The Notorious B.I.G, who was murdered earlier that year. Like the characters in *Wasted* they reminisce over times shared together, directly address their absent friend and describe how, although no longer alive, he is still present ('words can't express what you mean to me/even though you're gone, we're still a team').

Neoliberalism

The term ‘neoliberalism’, describes an advanced form of capitalism, characterized by free-market economics and the privatization of government provision of public services. Proponents of this model argue that it allows a growth in wealth for the richest, which will ‘trickle down’ to benefit all members of society. Those who oppose neoliberalism argue that, instead, it has created greater wealth disparity than ever, meaning that while a few people hoard massive wealth, huge numbers suffer as they struggle to meet the costs of living – or become trapped in soul destroying routines. Critics also argue that neoliberal ideology promotes selfishness and exacerbates environmental degradation, as it focuses on the success of the individual over the advancement of society at large.

Although *Wasted* does not address the crisis of neoliberalism directly and explicitly (plays that do this include Caryl Churchill’s *Serious Money* (Royal Court 1987)¹ and Lucy Prebble’s *Enron* (Chichester Festival Theatre 2009),² both of which look at the financial machinations of neoliberalism), it does reveal how the lives of those living under this unfair system play out. The Chorus particularly draws explicit attention to these conditions (showing us how the populace becomes ‘steeped in pretence’ as we navigate a system that has us ‘stressing over bills to pay’³).

Many contemporary works of realism that deal with working-class people and environments draw attention to the injustices of neoliberalism in similar indirect ways – displaying the lives of those ‘left out’ in order to expose the brutality and unfairness of the current system. Gary Owen’s 2015 play *Iphigenia in Splott* (Sherman Theatre 2015),⁴ for example, shows us the life of Effie as she struggles to survive in her small Welsh town that shows all the signs of austerity: ‘boarded up houses, NHS cutbacks and people too worn-out to care about those falling through the cracks’.⁵ Like *Tempest*, Owen draws on Greek mythology (in classical myth, Iphigenia is sacrificed to appease the goddess Artemis) in order to critique the conditions of the modern world, and highlight how even seemingly contemporary systems connect with timeless human concerns.

Youth culture

The transition from adolescence to adulthood, as we see in *Wasted*, is fraught. In Scene One, Danny encapsulates the crisis of early adulthood when he tells Ted how reflecting on the loss of Tony has made him realize he has been wandering aimlessly, letting his dreams fall away. He has become the person he is as a result of his actions, rather than through choice. ('All the things you done, that's just what you done. You weren't even thinking. But now, suddenly it's made you who you are. You can't go back, can ya?')⁶ Although the characters in *Wasted* articulate a sense of hopelessness particularly tied up with the millennial moment, the struggle of finding your way as an adult in politically fraught times is, as I mention above, a universal human experience.

In Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* the struggle to become an adult, and break out of the expectations of family and society end in tragedy. Jim Cartwright's 1986 play *Road* (Royal Court Theatre 1986),⁷ on the other hand, is a seminal example, of a social realist play that, like *Wasted*, explores how young people survive in times of social and political turmoil. It hones in on the young people on an unnamed road in Lancashire and records 'with exemplary honesty, the consequences of living in an economically run-down society'.⁸

The 2016 play *We Are Ian* (Edinburgh Fringe), a devised piece by the collective In Bed With My Brother, similarly explores the theme of transitioning to adulthood. In this production, three figures on the cusp of adulthood in the mid-2010s listen to the disembodied voice of a character called 'Ian', who tells them how exciting it was to be part of the rave youth movement of the 1990s. Bewildered and politically adrift, the trio attempt to recreate Ian's nostalgic rave stories, hilariously illustrating how little the millennial generation have to hold on to politically, utterly let down by a broken political system that is indifferent to their distress. The plays I mentioned above resonate with *Wasted* in both the 'timeless' ways they engage with the condition of becoming an adult, as well as, in the case of *Road* and *We Are Ian* especially, in how they interrogate the way contemporary political structures shape how young people are able to live their lives.

First Production

Wasted was first performed at the Latitude Festival, which is an annual music event that takes place at Henham Park, a sprawling country estate and former hunting ground in Suffolk, England. The production then toured the UK. Music festivals have become significant features of contemporary youth culture. Performance scholar Alice O'Grady has written about the potential of the festival site for fostering connection, and creating a space for playful exploration.¹ She demonstrates how contemporary music festivals emerge from the Free Party scene of the 1980s and '90s, associated with hedonism, drug taking and political activism (contemporary festivals also have their roots in the youth-driven festivals of the 1960s and '70s in both the US and UK, Woodstock and Glastonbury being important historical examples). Music festivals today still retain traces of this radical history. Although the content of *Wasted* can be thought about in terms of the 'hopeless millennial' moment, then, we could also look at this specific first production and think about how the festival site connects the **work** to histories of radical youth movements – further emphasizing its 'youth culture' theme.

Plays make meaning not just through what is on stage and in the text, but also through where and how they are performed. Importantly, we can 'read' meanings onto the works we are analysing, using them to think more deeply about issues that might only be tangential to the plot or content of the plays themselves. In other words, plays don't only mean one thing. What we understand about what we see on stage depends on our own experiences, thought processes and points of view.

Perhaps then we can see *Wasted* as more hopeful when it is performed in a festival environment. Or perhaps we can think about how the world of 'wasted' young people on stage reflects the world of the festival and turns a mirror back on the audience. Another reading might be made in thinking about how festivals themselves, which were once radical anarchic sites, have been co-opted by corporate sponsors – what does the hopeless capitalist routine of wasting life in soulless corporate environments and trying to escape through drugs and alcohol have to say to us about the corporate sponsored

festival? How can we make sense of a drama that is critical of the capitalist system, at a festival taking place on a country manor estate, the symbolic space of the landed gentry, bound up in the history of the UK's oppressive class system?

In the first production of *Wasted*, a large screen was used to project images, such as the opening motifs, to the audience. This illustrates one way in which a directorial choice was made that differs to the stage directions in the printed text. We might understand this decision too as a comment on contemporary youth culture, with the escalation of screen media via the use of mobile phones then (in 2011) a fairly recent development, as Tempest explained to me in an interview:

Wasted came at the tail end of a time where things were on the cusp of changing. Things really, really changing. I think what I mean is the prevalence of information, the surge in the availability of new and social media, and the addictive nature of the smartphone as it gets more common to have one. Suddenly there's this attachment to phones.

While the characters themselves do not have smartphones (that, as Tempest also pointed out to me, would be impossible were she to write the play in 2018, when our interview takes place), the screen itself seems to comment on the ever-presence of the screen in contemporary life, and invites questions about how the experience of millennial youth is mediated via **the screen**.

Another interesting aspect of a production to 'read' in multiple ways is its casting. In the play text, *Wasted's* characters are specified only by their names and ages (never specifically indicated, but suggested through the dialogue). They have no other defining features, aside from the London dialect they speak in. In the first production of *Wasted* all the actors were Caucasian (white). This affects how we might understand the play's politics, particularly in terms of its engagement with hip hop, which is a black cultural movement that emerged on the streets of New York. What does it mean for white actors to channel this history in a culturally elite space like the theatre? And how might the play's politics appear different if we cast actors of different races in the roles? Would this change the meaning? We can ask the same questions about gender –

18 Wasted

what if ~~Charlotte was~~ played by an openly transgender actor, for example? Does this, or could this layer the play with alternative readings? These questions do not have definitive answers, but I offer them to encourage you to think about how performances work not only through what is written on the page, but through what appears on the stage – where, how and at what point in history.

Notes

Context

- 1 p. 9.
- 2 p. 39.
- 3 p. 26.
- 4 Chris Richardson, 'Making "Changes": 2pac, Nas and the Habitus of the Hood', in *Habitus of the Hood*, ed. Chris Richardson and Hans A. Skott-Myhre (Bristol: Intellect, 2012), 193–214.
- 5 See CHRONOLOGY section of this introduction.
- 6 p. 21.
- 7 p. 49.
- 8 pp. 18–19.
- 9 Tom Slater, 'Gentrification of a City', <https://www.geos.ed.ac.uk/homes/tslater/gotcbridgewatson.pdf> [Accessed 10th February 2019].
- 10 Jen Harvie, *Fair Play: Art, Performance and Neoliberalism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 119–127.
- 11 Arinze Kene, *Misty* (London: Nick Hern Books, 2018).

Form and Genre

- 1 Katie Beswick, *Social Housing in Performance: The English Council Estate On and Off Stage* (London: Methuen Drama, 2019), 111.
- 2 Christina Zanfagna, 'Under the Blasphemous W(RAP): Locating the "Spirit" in Hip-Hop', *Pacific Review of Ethnomusicology* 12 (2006), <https://ethnomusicologyreview.ucla.edu/journal/volume/12/piece/507> [Accessed 10 February 2019].
- 3 p. 4.
- 4 p. 44.
- 5 The term 'iambic pentameter' describes a line of verse, usually with ten syllables, where the speaker stresses the beat on every second syllable. For example, 'But, *soft!* what *light* through *yonder window breaks?*'
- 6 Harry Elm, 'Revising the Past, Pushing into the Future', *American Theatre* (2004), quoted in Nicole Hodges Persley, 'Hip-Hop Theatre and Performance', in *The Cambridge Companion to Hip-Hop* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 85–98.

20 Notes

- 7 ‘Hip hop and Shakespeare? Akala at TEDXAldeburgh’, *TEDXTalks*, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DSbtKLA3GrY> [Accessed 7 February 2019].
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Kris Haamer, ‘The Function of the Chorus in Greek Drama’ (2019), <http://krishaamer.com/function-chorus-greek-drama/> [Accessed 7 February 2019].
- 10 Raymond Williams, *Culture and Materialism* (London: Verso, 1980), 127.
- 11 pp. 3–4.
- 12 See, for example, Michael Vanden Heuvel, ‘Complementary Spaces: Realism, Performance and a New Dialogics of Theatre’, *Theatre Journal* 41, no. 1 (1992): 47–58.

Themes

- 1 Caryl Churchill, *Serious Money* (London: Methuen Drama, 2002).
- 2 Lucy Prebble, *Enron* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009).
- 3 p. 9.
- 4 Gary Owens, *Iphigenia in Splott* (London: Oberon Books, 2015).
- 5 Tom Wicker, ‘Iphigenia in Splott review at the National’s Temporary Theatre London – “blisteringly powerful”’, *The Stage*, 30 January 2016, <https://www.thestage.co.uk/reviews/2016/iphigenia-in-splott-review-at-the-nationals-temporary-theatre-london-blisteringly-powerful/> [Accessed 11 February 2019].
- 6 p. 16.
- 7 Jim Cartwright, *Road* (London: Samuel French, 2014).
- 8 Michael Billington, ‘Road review – raucous look back at a divided Britain still hits home’, *Guardian*, 30 July 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2017/jul/30/road-review-royal-court> [Accessed 10 February 2019].

First Production

- 1 Kathleen O’Grady, ‘Dancing Outdoors: DiY Ethics and Democratised Practices of Well-being on the UK Alternative Festival Circuit’, *Dancecult: Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture* 7, no. 1 (2015): 76–96.

Further Exploration

Works by Kate Tempest

- Broken Herd*, CD box set, Moresounds Lab (2009).
Best Intentions, EP with Sound of Rum, Bratwell Recordings (2009).
Patterns, self published poetry booklet (2010).
Balance, album with Sound of Rum, Sunday Best Recordings (2011).
Everything Speaks in its Own Way, poetry zine (London: Zingaro, 2012).
Brand New Ancients, epic performance poem (London: Picador, 2013).
Hopelessly Devoted, play (London: Methuen Drama, 2015).
Everybody Down, album, Big Dada (2014).
Hold Your Own, poetry collection (London: Picador, 2014).
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Let them Eat Chaos, album (Kate Calvert Records, 2016).
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On hip hop

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Wasted

Wasted premiered at Latitude Festival on 15 July 2011 and the cast was as follows:

Ted Alexander Cobb

Danny Ashley George

Charlotte Lizzy Watts

The play toured in 2012 to 26 venues. The role of Ted was played by Cary Crankson and the role of Danny by Bradley Taylor.

Direction James Grieve

Design Cai Dyfan

Lighting Design Angela Anson

Sound Design Tom Gibbons

Music Kwake Bass

Film Design Mathy Tremewan & Fran Broadhurst

Associate Director Stef O'Driscoll

Assistant Director Mark Maughan

Company Stage Manager Harriet Stewart

Production & Technical Colin Everitt

Stage Manager

Producer Tara Wilkinson

Line Producer Hanna Streeter

These stage directions are open for interpretation.

Dark stage. Sounds of London play out the speakers. Drunks singing. Sirens. Market men. Television hosts heard through living room windows. Traffic. People laughing. School kids screaming. All field recordings, actual London sounds. Projections of London play on the screen. Lights come up gently, like sunrise, revealing each character one at a time.

Ted is at a shitty little desk, really small, with a massive phone on it and a chunky old computer monitor and loads of files. He looks like he feels sick. He is smiling politely. To either side of him are cardboard cut-outs of middle-aged women with immaculate hair, something about them is hideous. They have oversized heads. They are blown up, monstrous versions of work colleagues. The sounds now are of phones ringing, call centre type voices, not clearly saying anything, but polite, sickly tones, pretending to be helpful, also women talking about celebrity couples, their next door neighbours. Mindless gossip. Teddy stares straight ahead.

Charlotte is in the staff room. Sounds of boiling kettles, laughing teachers, inaudible bullshit conversation. The tones are sarcastic, tired. People show off and compete for the upper hand. The conversations are dominated by exaggerated bellowing, the arsehole teacher slagging off the kids to make themselves feel better. Bells ringing. Photocopier sounds. Charlotte stands between two cardboard cut-outs of teachers with massive eyebrows, ears, lips, a woman in drab clothes – ill fitting leggings type – and a balding man in glasses and liverspots. Charlotte is smiling along, but looks like she might faint, or cry, or something. She looks completely alone, despite all the noise.

Danny is sitting on a dingy sofa, in front of a coffee table. Power ballads playing from a cheesy radio station. Magic FM.¹ Bullshit conversation, sound of loud, exaggerated sniffing, people doing lines. To either side of him are two cardboard cut-outs of ~~twenty five year old~~ London men, they are both wearing very similar **jeans** and t-shirts. They are bulky. Their heads are monstrous, especially their nostrils and mouths. Also two women, laughing hysterically, massive eyelashes, lips, perfect hair. Over-exaggerated laughing. Inaudible

retelling of teenage memories. Empty cans of lager and bottles of strange spirits – weird things like chocolate liqueur and Babycham.² Anything goes at this time of the morning. The voices in the room are talking over each other, singing along to the power ballads, laughing. **Danny** looks sick, like the other two have looked, confused, but he's smiling and nodding along. Cutting up a line for himself.

The sound swells to uncomfortably loud, maybe some white noise, and then cuts out. These three, as well as being the characters, are also the **Chorus**. When they are speaking the chorus lines, they are all and none of the characters. Any of them can speak any of the Chorus lines. They should speak to the audience. They shouldn't be afraid of smiling at the audience, or looking at them dead in the eye. They should speak in their own accents, and be aware of the meter beneath the words, in the way that you are aware of a beat when you dance to a song. These are not the characters yet (even though they are) they are also everyone that's ever felt how the characters feel.

Chorus One

One If we're being honest with you,

Three Actually honest, not just apparently honest.

One Then we have to tell you, we don't have a clue what any of you are doing here.

Two We're not really sure what any of us are doing here.

Three Thing is,

Two We wish we had some kind of incredible truth to express.

One We wish we knew the deeper meaning.

Three But we don't.

Two We don't have nothing to tell you that you don't already know, and we thought it was worth acknowledging that.

Three Fuck it, while we're speaking plainly, let's get it all out in the open.

One We're not used to this kind of environment.

Two We're the people that feel awkward in theatres,

One The people that don't laugh at the bits where everyone else laughs.

Two The people that never know what to say afterwards when everyone else is expressing their opinions.

Three We don't want to stand here in front of you and pretend we can't see you.

One We can see you.

Three You look lovely. And we're glad you're here.

One We are.

Two We don't want to show you something impressive that makes you feel clever.

One No.

30 Wasted

Three We just want to show you something honest,

One Something ours.

Two And we'll be happy if it makes you feel anything at all.

One No big deal, but

Three At the same time,

One Everything we ever knew.

Two What this is, is home.

One Deserted playgrounds, tramps singing on the street, bleeding gums outside the pub, takeaways and car exhausts and bodies till you can't see bodies.

Three Working shit jobs

Two And trying to care about things you don't care about

Three And saving up to buy things you hate yourself for wanting.

All Home.

Two A city where nothing much happens except everything.

Three Where everyone is so entirely involved in their own

One 'nothing much'

Three That they forget about the everything happening elsewhere.

Two And the thing is, if we're being honest with you,

One And that's all we want to be –

Two It's important that we tell you that we have no idea what we're doing.

One We need you to understand the history here.

Three See –

One We were thirteen once, with our fists full of beer that we jacked³ from the office,

Three We lived without fear.

Two We looked up to our elders,

Three And awaited the days

Two When we'd be looked up to by kids half our age.

Three The years passed,

One We got wasted in raves and felt

Two Godlike.

Three Held spliffs⁴ up in the dark of the party like

Two Fog lights.

One We were children in a city of

Two Dogfights and rock pipes,⁵

One Surrounded by

Two Deadbeats and lost types

Three London belonged to

All Us

Two We smoked skunk⁶ on the bus.

Three Everything was ours.

One We got thumped in the guts but

All Stood firm.

Three We was young and we trusted each other,

Two It was all romantic and real.

Three We was frantic and full of our feelings and laughing and squealing,

One Holding our sides beneath the unfolding of skies in the evening.

Two Ah, but things happened.

Three Our eyes got

32 Wasted

One Dimmer

Three And our dreams got

One Flattened.

Two We got older, didn't we? We got responsibilities,

One Started seeing our defiance as arrogance and stupidity.

Two We used to be rebellious

Three And angry

One And in it all together,

Three But time passed and we realised

Two Nothing

One Lasts

Three Forever.

Two So now we carry it within us, the fact we used to be

One Eternal,

Two Before the world caught up and we forgot what we was
living for.

Three We became

One The inmate,

Two The guard,

Three And the key that locked the prison door.

Two We used to skim the surface

One Till we sank and hit the river floor.

Two We realised,

One This is all there is.

Three There really isn't more.

One Staring down the barrel

Two Of an empty bottle

Three Asking it to give us

All More.

One Hearts beating

Three Slower than they used to, stressing over bills to pay,

Two A million distractions just to fill the day,

Three Faces greyer than before. It's not our world no more

One It's someone else's.

Two We're less empathetic and more

Three Selfish,

Two Less independent and more

Three Helpless.

Two Thing is though,

One We soldier on through the cityscape,

Two Trying to carve out a niche for ourselves in our little ways.

Three Life's great,

One Life's awful.

Two Repetitions and figure eights,

One We're living like our best days

Two Have already slipped away.

One And honestly,

Three How can we rise up and take the reigns back,

Two When all we really wanna do is to kill our dreams and let
our brains

All Smack


Two Themselves about in the corner of a rave?

34 Wasted

Three Desperate for someone to help us, but convinced we can't be saved.

One We got friends we known since we were born, but we can't tell them what we're feeling,

Three We're alone with the city in all its dirty heaving mess –

Two Where the children fight for breath and get  old before their time,

One Or, die young enough to live forever, or lose their fuckin' minds.

Three And that's the perfect tragedy of London –

Two A city where the best of us lose our ability to function,

One And the worst of us thrive,

Two And the rest of us stride on and on through

Three The mess,

Two The rust,

Three The flesh,

Two The lust,

Three The lies.

One The breath,

Three The dust,

One The skies we lift our heads to watch,

Three The pride.

Two The sex,

Three The blood,

Two The fried food,

Three The stress

Two The way we hide from the truth that is inside.

Three We hold so tight to our disguise,

One That we find ourselves alone when we're surrounded,
divided from our tribe.

Scene One

Ted *is sitting on a park bench looking out at the audience. He's looking at Tony's tree. He has a can in his hand, a plastic bag full of cans by his feet. He's wearing a cheap suit and shoes, but he doesn't look shabby. He looks smart. Smoking. He sits there for a long moment before speaking. Sound of birds, distant sirens. Kids screaming in a playground somewhere. Traffic. Ted seems quite pissed.⁷ But he's holding it together.*

Ted It used to be, we hung out coz I couldn't wait to be around her, couldn't wait to bury my head in her tits and listen to her giggle. But now, we wake up together every morning and it don't feel the same.

I think I'm miserable, Tony. I wouldn't want her to know that, it don't seem fair on her, but between you and me mate, I think I'm pretty fuckin' miserable. Right now I mean, today.

She thinks I'm on the career ladder coz I wear this shitty suit to the office, but I'm not though, Tony, I'm going nowhere, surrounded by idiots. Nicole from accounts, stinkin' of custard creams⁸ and talkin' all the fuckin' time. Mate. It's killin' me, the weeks go by, every day the same shit. I'll be doin' the stock take and the data entry 'til I'm dead in the ground and it won't have made the slightest bit of difference to no one. I wouldn't even mind it, you know, it's work. It's payin' the bills, but it's so fuckin' tedious though. I'm in there, all day, giving them all of my fuckin' time, and every day that goes past stacks up, and I swear it, right, sometimes, at night, I can see all the days I've given 'em, all huddled together in this massive crowd at the foot of my bed, laughin' at me when I'm trying to sleep. We're still young, for fuck's sake. We could sell the car. Leave the flat. Fuck off for a year. We could live in Spain, I could get a job in a bar.

She could be a waitress. We could swim naked in the sea. We could get drunk in the afternoons and sleep it off on the beach, we could ...

Danny *walks up the path behind him and stands next to him for a minute, looking at the bag by his feet. He sits down.*

Danny Alright, Ted?

Ted Alright, Dan?

Danny How's it goin'?

Ted Yeah, alright mate, not bad.

Danny *looks around, at the tree, smokes his cigarette.*

Ted Ten years.

Danny I know mate. Feels like yesterday, dunnit?

Ted Feels like ten years to me.

Danny *takes some skunk out of his pocket and starts skinning up,⁹ it's a bit windy. Without being asked to, Ted shields Danny's hand from the wind.*

Ted *(to Tony, about Danny)* He ain't changed much, still believes he can have whatever he wants. Thinks he's gonna play guitar on seminal albums and tour America and write a cult fuckin' novel that'll change the way we think about our lives. Shit. He's one of my oldest friends, and I love him to pieces. I'd lie down and fuckin' die in the road for him – but sometimes, sometimes, he can be a bit of a knob. You know, I'm not being funny, but, you know, when he's with all his cool new 'creative' mates. They ain't real, Tony. They ain't like us. They sit around, with ironic trousers on and three haircuts each, waiting to be discovered.

What he don't realise is that in ten years, he'll be thirty/five, one a them fuckers we used to laugh at at parties, gurning his face off, dribbling over some nineteen/year/old acid casualty called Sparkle telling himself he's still got it. He'll be there, giving it the old – I might be sensitive but I'm still dangerous – treating women like shit coz he hates himself for never having had the guts to put himself second and commit to one of 'em. It takes strength to

3-1-3

3-1-3 (x2)

commit, Tone, it really fuckin' does ... Then, next thing he knows, he'll be forty-five, strung out from the cocaine and the booze and the MDMA,¹⁰ having panic attacks every night when he's on his own, coz he'll have realised that he's too old to be young anymore, and the world won't apply to him, and all the kids'll be listening to music he don't understand and suddenly all o' them interesting ideas he had, and all them exciting collaborations he was involved in, won't be half as fuckin' important anymore. He'll be worse off than me then. He'll have no seminal fuckin' work to wank off about, he'll be alone in his trendy flat, conducting imaginary interviews with imaginary journalists about imaginary masterpieces. And me? I'll be as miserable as I've always been, right there beside him.

Danny *finishes rolling the joint.¹¹ He lights it, lifts it to the tree, exhales, passes it to Ted. Ted smokes, heavily.*

Danny What do you reckon he'd be up to now?

Ted What d'you mean?

Danny Like, for a job.

Ted Dunno. Same as the rest of us probably. Fuck all.

Danny Nah, he would have been something.

Ted Like what?

Danny I dunno. Something.

Ted Like what?

Danny Dunno. Chef. Have his own restaurant.

Ted He couldn't cook an egg, mate.

Danny Cameraman then. Or a vet or something. I dunno. Anything. Fuckin' lawyer.

Ted Lawyer?

Danny Fireman.

Ted He would have made a good lawyer actually.

38 Wasted

Danny Train driver.

Ted Know what I heard about train drivers?

Danny What?

Ted If you drive a train and you hit three people. Like, if three people jump out in front of your train.

Danny Yeah?

Ted You get paid leave and a pension rest of your life.

Danny Really?

Ted Yeah, even if you only been on the job a week.

Danny That's mental.

Ted Sounds alright though, don't it? I was thinking about doing it.

Danny Yeah?

Ted Couldn't handle it though, if someone did jump out.

Danny Never forgive yourself would ya?

Ted Three times as well. Fuck you right up that would.

Danny Still, he woulda been something, Ted. He would have.

Ted Well, we'll never know now, will we?

Danny No. S'pose not.

Ted Such a waste.

Pause. They Drink.

Danny How's work?


Ted Yeah, it's alright.

Danny Same old same old eh?

Ted Something like that, yeah.

Danny I dunno how you do it, mate.

Ted Well, you just do, don't ya? You just do.

Danny Yeah,  se.

Ted What about you? How's the band and that?

Danny Oh yeah, great yeah. Well, you know, we don't have a drummer at the moment, but we have got these t-shirts we made. And I met a guy the other day who said he'd be up for drumming for us, and he's pretty good as far as I can tell. Well, I ain't heard him drum, but, he looks like a drummer. Long hair, tattoos and that. Nice guy.

Ted Tell you the truth, Dan, I can't fuckin' stand it.

Danny Can't stand what?

Ted It's not like you set out to end up nowhere is it.

Danny You ain't nowhere, mate. You're working hard.

Ted I need to change it up, Dan. If not for me, for him. I mean, look.

Danny What?

Ted Well, look at his tree.

Danny What about it?

Ted Even that changes four times a year. Know what I mean?

Danny Yeah, I do. I do. I been thinking the same thing.

Ted Course you have.

Danny Day like today, you think, fuck. Don't you? All of a sudden ten years has gone by. All the things you done, that's just what you done. You weren't even thinking. But now, suddenly it's made you who you are. You can't go back, can ya?

Ted No, you can't.

Danny So, I'm making some changes right now, as it goes. I had an epiphany, didn't I.

Ted An epiphany?

Danny Yeah, you know. Like a realisation.

40 Wasted

Ted Yeah, I know what it fuckin' means, mate. What did you realise?

Danny That it's time, innit, it's time now.

Ted Time for what?

Danny Time for me to sort my shit out.

Ted In what way?

Danny In all ways. I've gotta fix up. Get a proper job, stop getting fucked all the time.

Ted Why?

Danny For Charlotte, innit.

Ted Charlotte?

Danny I want her back, don't I.

Ted Serious?

Danny Yeah.

Ted How's that going then?

Danny Well, it's up and down to be honest. Sometimes it feels like she's up for it, but then suddenly she goes all cold.

Ted Well, she's probably just trying to be careful mate.

Danny She's driving me mental.

Ted Do you mean it?

Danny Course I mean it. That's what I'm saying, I need to fix up.

Ted She's a nice girl, Dan. She's not a dickhead.

Danny I wanna settle down.

Ted You wanna settle down?

Danny Yeah. What's wrong with that?

Ted You broke her heart, Dan.

Danny I just need one more chance. That's all. If she'd just give me one more chance, it'd be different this time, but that's what I'm saying, you can't go back can ya?

Ted No.

Danny Like, last night, we went for a drink.

Ted Yeah?

Danny Fuckin' great it was. Went back to hers. It was all good. But then, like this morning, soon as I wake up she's giving me the silent treatment, looking at me like I tricked her or something. Like I done something bad, I say, what's going on, then she just freezes up, leaves for work.

Ted That good was it.

Danny I keep telling her, fresh start, but what can I do? If she's always expecting me to act the cunt, pretty soon, I'm gonna act the cunt, aren't I?

Ted She needs to know you ain't gonna waste her time again. She's testing you.

Danny I ain't gonna waste her time again, Ted. That's what I'm saying. The epiphany, it dawned on me, you know, today, Tony's day and all that. I got to stop pissing about and actually get something started. Show her innit. Show her that I mean it.

Ted Yeah?

Danny I'm changing things, ain't I, this is it, mate.

Ted Well, good for you, pal. Good for you.

They drink. Smoke the spliff. Danny takes a puff and holds the smoke in, passes it to Ted and doesn't exhale until he gets the joint back. Ted does the same.

Danny What you doing later anyway?

Ted Dunno, this, more of this.

Danny We should do something, shouldn't we? Celebrate.

42 Wasted

Ted Celebrate what? He's dead.

Danny You know what I mean. Mark the occasion. He would have wanted us to.

Ted What you got in mind?

Danny Well, there's this party my mates are putting on.

Ted What kind of party?

Danny Nothing too mental,

Ted Oh right, just the usual twenty rig sound clash then, let me guess – warehouse in Peckham¹² full of wannabe rude boys out to rob phones, and trendy fuckin' art students passed out in a corner experiencing Ketamine.¹³ Think I'm alright, mate.

Danny Dont be a dick. Come on.

Ted What about your epiphany?

Danny What about it?

Ted It's not really my thing anymore, Dan.

Danny It'll be a laugh.

Ted A laugh? We'll get there, you'll fuck off and start chatting to a bunch of people with adjectives instead of names, while I sit there like a lemon, getting drunk on my own.

Danny It won't be like that, Ted. Come on, we ain't been out in ages.

Ted That's coz I ain't really on it no more.

Danny Ten years, Ted. Come on, for Tony, mate.

Ted Charlotte going?

Danny Yeah, she is.

Ted Maybe it would be nice, me and you and Charlotte, like the old days, eh?

Danny Exactly.

Ted Alright, let's go party then, shall we? But you can't just fuck off with her the minute we get there and leave me, Billy no mates, looking like someone's brought their Dad along.

Danny Nah, Ted. The three of us. We'll go and have it, for Tony, and the old days. And for right now. And for fuckin' forever mate.

Ted Oh stop will ya, I'm welling up.

Scene Two

Charlotte's standing at a bar, with a gin and tonic. She looks tired. The cardboard cut-outs from earlier are all around her: Sound of people talking, not saying much, songs from a juke box, doors opening and closing, barmaid bantering with regulars. The friendly sounds make a contrast with the still, monstrous cut-outs, who are crowding her. Really close to her. She faces the audience, with them either side, the bar between her and the edge of the stage.

Charlotte I'm stood at the front of the class and I feel like I'm drowning. I'm staring out at them, and I'm thinking who the fuck are you lot anyway? I look at them, but I can't see children, I can just see the colour of their jumpers, smudges where their faces should be.

Behind me, today's date is written on the board. I'm trying to pretend I don't know what it means.

It's hot and the classroom stinks, and the clock's broken and the work stuck up on the walls is old and the corners are coming away and the kids are screaming.

I'm trying to remember why I wanted to do this in the first place. You can't inspire minds on a timetable like this.

I think I'm miserable, Tony.

I mean, I stand in the staffroom in between classes and smile along with the others, but they're all so bitter, Tony. They're all so fuckin' hateful. Thirty years in the job, and they hate everything about it, but it's too late for them to get a new job and I'm pretty

sure that secretly they hope the kids'll come to nothing. I mean it. You should hear the way they talk about them. No wonder the kids are killing each other over postcodes,¹⁴ or getting sick at the thought of not being famous.

The classroom's hot, and I'm staring at the kids, and I'm remembering us lot when we was at school – moving through the corridors like we was the fuckin' Roman empire. I'm remembering how it felt to be fifteen, us lot, in a party, feeling like the world was ours, like we fuckin' owned it. I'm remembering how we cared about each other, how we got in fights for each other and robbed Tesco's¹⁵ and built fires and got off our faces, it was exciting, wasn't it? It felt real.

What even happened to us? We go parties now, and we've got nothing to say to each other 'til we're fucked. And even then. We spend hours talking about parties from before, things that happened to us once, we spend life retelling life and it's pointless and boring.

And so, I'm staring out at the kids, watching them slouching in their chairs and playing with their phones and suddenly I'm remembering the other day, sunlight through the window of a hot train, I'm sat there, heading into town, and there's a group of ten or fifteen boys on some kind of field trip with their teacher, and they're wearing nice uniforms, they must have been from a private school or something. I mean, I listened to them talking to each other and I wanted to cry, coz these were young men with beautiful voices and healthy hair and good posture, talking to each other in perfect English, and helping each other with equations and fuckin' algebra and asking each other questions about how to say this or that particular thing in French, and it didn't seem fair. I thought of the kids here, in my class, with their squinty eyes and bad skin, mouths full of swear words and silence, and it didn't seem fair. And I'm stood there and I feel like bursting into tears and telling them all to run out on the streets and smash windows or something, do something. I want to tell them they're perfect and they're strong and tell them to go out and live every minute of their lives from their guts, to go after what they want, to own this fuckin' terrible city and get all they can out of life. But I don't say anything do I? I mean, what could I say?

I say nothing. I just stand there and listen to them telling each other to fuck off, I stare at the broken clock, the work peeling

off the walls, and I know this is the last time I'll stand here in front of them, the last time. And I'm staring at them, wondering what they'll be like ten years from now. And then, suddenly, I'm thinking of Danny. I'm thinking of last night. It was perfect. But then I woke up and I looked at him, and I thought about the future. Six months down the line, a year maybe, two. I'll be distant, worn out by him, and he'll be pretending nothing's changed, out of pride he'll put his doubts away, convince himself to be this man he tells me only I can make him, this better man he talks about. But really, we'll be sick of each other, we'll be stifled and clinging to each other as tight as we can to keep ourselves from accepting there's nothing you can give a person that don't take half of them away. I can see myself, eating alone at the kitchen table, wondering where he is, the nagging girlfriend, uptight and unreasonable, his laughter in the pub, shrugging it off, me, sat there, feeling so self-righteous that even when he does come home I can't show him that deep down I'm really fuckin happy to see him. And then the moody silences, and off to bed, and strange, private dreams, and waking up to the alarm going and kissing him goodbye without smiling and on and on until everything I want for myself is forgotten, Even if it feels good now, it'll end in the same grey routine, the cozy choking afternoons. The unsaid words getting heavier and heavier 'til we don't even fight out loud anymore.

And so here I am, in front of the class, and the classroom's hot and I feel like I'm drowning and I walk out of the classroom. I open the door and walk out of the classroom. And the kids are shouting after me, but I ignore them. I walk down the corridor, I turn left, I walk down the stairs, kids everywhere, I swim through them, turn left again, the doors. I walk through the doors. I'm in the air. I'm outside. It's raining gently. It's good. I'm walking to the bus stop. I'm leaving. I'm making a decision. I'm changing things. This is it.

And then I'm coming in here and I'm ordering a drink for me and one for you, Tony, and I'm carrying them over to the table in the corner, and I'm staring at the pint and the empty chair and I'm trying to remember the first time they served us in here. I'm taking

a sip of my drink, and then I'm taking a sip of your drink. And I'm remembering your face, and I'm smiling to myself. It's the weekend, Tony, the first weekend of the rest of my life.

Ted (*like he might have said it a few times already*) Charlotte?

Charlotte Alright, Ted. Sorry, I was miles away.

Ted Someone sitting here?

Charlotte No, go on.

Ted What, that not someone's drink?

Charlotte Got it for, Tony. Silly innit?

Ted No course not, not silly at all.

Charlotte You been to his tree yet?

Ted Yeah.

Charlotte How was it?

Ted Oh, you know, still there. You been down yet?

Charlotte Nah, not yet. Couldn't face it. Came here instead.

Ted How's work?

Charlotte Yeah, it's alright. How's yours?

Ted Yeah, ya know. Not bad.

Charlotte I miss him Ted. Do you? Do you miss him?

Ted Yeah. Course I do.

Charlotte

Ted But you know what?

Charlotte What?

Ted Of all the conversations we had, me and him, over the years and that, I can't remember any of 'em.

Charlotte What d'you mean?

Ted Like, we spent years talking to each other, but I can't remember a word we said.

Charlotte Far as I remember it was mainly – safe bruv, heavy, or let me have a Rizla.¹⁶

Ted Point is, you don't remember the particulars do you, just the feelings. I know I knew him, but I can't remember how. You know what I mean?

Charlotte Not really.

Ted That's why you got to act on your feelings innit, coz it's all you got. you're either happy, or you ain't.

Charlotte I left my job.

Ted What? Really? How?

Charlotte I just handed my notice in.

Ted What, that it? Just like that?

Charlotte Yeah. I just walked out.

Ted Fuck. You left your job! ... How do you feel? Do you feel different?

Charlotte No, not really, not yet.

Ted So what you gonna do?

Charlotte I'm going away.

Ted What?

Charlotte I ain't told anyone yet, but I booked a flight. I'm off, Ted.

Ted What?

Charlotte I just thought, fuck it, you know. Fuck it. And I went online, and I booked a flight and that's it, I'm leaving.

Ted What about Danny?

Charlotte What about Danny?

Ted You tell me.

Charlotte It's complicated.

Ted Why?

48 Wasted

Charlotte I don't know.

Ted Don't you like him?

Charlotte No, not really, he's an asshole.

Ted Everyone needs an asshole.

Charlotte I don't trust him, Ted.

Ted He means it this time.

Charlotte He thinks he does. And he's very convincing, but I don't believe him. And I don't want to feel guilty for always doubting him.

Ted What do you want then?

Charlotte I just want a change.

Ted Is that why you're going away?

Charlotte Yeah.

Ted When you gonna tell him?

Charlotte I don't know

Ted You coming out tonight though, right?

Charlotte Well, I was gonna, but, I got to pack and

Ted Nah Charlotte, you gotta come out girl. You gotta. For Tony and that. It'll be a right laugh. For me. And for Dan. The three of us. You gotta come. Anyway, packing can wait can't it. When you leaving?

Charlotte Tomorrow.

Ted Tomorrow?

Chorus Two

One Change coming!

Two Change coming!

One I swear, we can change something.

Three We change nothing.

Two Change is puffing up its chest.

One Change is jumping to its death.

Three Change is running,

One Short of breath,

Two Change is falling.

Three Change is calling on its people,

Two Change's people are not talking.

One Nothing changes. You walk around the city,

Two Stare at strangers,

One You might notice an expression on a friend you know for ages,

Two But it's hopeless,

Three We can't keep each other safe,

One We can barely focus.

Three We just want to live a little,

Two And what's living if it doesn't kill you?

Three Every atom in us screams at us to let our hearts out,

One But it's easier to

Two Pass out

One Than to fall asleep peacefully.

Three If we're lying to each other, we don't mean it deceitfully –

Two We're nothing more than rag and bone,

One We close our eyes

Three And stagger home,

50 Wasted

One While the groaning timbers in the windows seem to brag
and moan –

Three They say, ‘well, you look older

Two But you haven’t grown.’

One We see our faces slide across the pane,

Three We look away,

One Nothing for it,

Two Bosh your brain to glory,

Three Same old story

One And it shows no sign of

Three Ending.

One Coz there’s a whole night ahead of us,

Two Ours for the befriending,

Three And no matter what our brains beg of us,

One Our hearts are ripe for the tempting.

Three See,

One When you’re sick of being trodden down

Three You reach for your ascension in the nonsense that you
swallow down.

Two We just wanna find some

One Substance

Two In this hollow town.

One It doesn’t matter that tomorrow’s round the corner if ~~you’re~~
sorrows drowned tonight,

Two At least that’s something,

One And how can we be blamed when every day’s the same?

Two We just want to lose our names and our edges.

One We just want to lose our minds

Three And lose the lines that draw the borders.

Two The shadows haunt the corners,

Three No one's gonna laugh at you if no one knows your tortured.

Two We want to change,

One But change aborted becomes strange

Three And we are taunted by the same old repetitions,

Two We grin,

One But our smiles are contorted,

Three And we forget our epiphany

One The minute that we thought it.

Scene Three

*A party in a warehouse in Peckham. All three characters are completely munted.¹⁷ But not in a caricature kind of way. In a way that suggests they've been getting munted for many years, and know how to take drugs without having to make a big deal out of it. Dark lit stage, maybe strobe lights, or UV strip lights to make them look a bit monstrous, make their teeth look dirty, eyes look a bit alien etc. Dirty bass music playing. Loud. Nothing cheesy. Really dirty and bass heavy.¹⁸ There should be a feeling of loads of other people in the room. Maybe the cardboard cut-outs from earlier. **Danny** and **Ted** are sitting together with their backs against the speakers, on the floor; grinning, with their arms round each other's necks looking a bit like they're ten years old. There should be a massive difference in their physicality compared to earlier when they were sat on the bench together. They should be open and tactile. They giggle for a bit, then start wrestling each other. The three of them are dancing, in their own worlds, and then together. **Ted** throws his arms around both of their necks, they're*

all together, in a little love huddle, raving, and munted, looking up to the lights, swallowing, grinning, touching each other.

*Blackout, sound stops. Lights come up and it's daylight, sickly kind of daylight that you never really want to see. It's well into Saturday morning, **Ted, Danny and Charlotte** are sitting on an old sofa outside. The door to the party is to the back of the stage, the sofa is in a little yard that leads out to the street. Maybe some grass, or just concrete. They're wasted, eyes rolling, jaws tight, sipping water, swallowing, skin dirty, looking monstrous, feeling glamorous. They should all have their little MDMA ticks,¹⁹ either crooked fingers pointing their words out, or something in their faces. Post pill gremlins. **Charlotte** is physically with them (they're all touching each other somehow, at all times) but her mind seems elsewhere.*

Ted Anthony. Did you ever call him Anthony?

Danny No, only his Mum called him that.

Charlotte I called him Ant sometimes.

Ted Anthony. Sounds like a different guy, don't it?

Danny Does your Mum call you Edward?

Ted No. Does yours?

Danny No, I meant, like, Ted short for Edward.

Ted Nah, just plain old Ted, mate.

Danny My mum calls me Daniel.

Ted Suits you.

Danny Good. Suits you too.

Ted What does?

Danny That big fuckin' face of yours.

Ted What about it?

Danny Suits you. Just lovely.

Ted Thanks, Dan. I try my best you know, I do try.

Danny I look at your face, and I think, you know, I know it so long. I know every fuckin' bit of your face. It looks just like your face. Know what I mean? Fuckin' hell, I can't believe it. How long we been mates?

Ted Yeah. Weird, eh? Considering how much we hate each other.

Danny You have to ruin it don't you?

Ted I'm just joking, you know I'm joking. I think we're lucky really. I do, and we are, ain't we, us three?

Danny Yeah.

Ted Some people don't have mates.

Danny No.

Ted It's been really getting me down recently, you know.

Danny What has, mate?

Ted Oh, you know, work, and the routine, and Sally and me, the flat, and who's doing the washing up, and who's making the dinner or, you know. It's. I dunno. I ain't really been seeing a lot of anyone else. Lost contact with a lot of people, I suppose. It's life though, innit. Getting older. But, sometimes Dan, I link up with you, and I think, what a cunt, you know? Coz, you don't have any of those kind of worries do you? The fuckin' rush hour on the Tube, and the telly and the pub quiz. You just naff around being interesting, and I think, what a prick. You know. But, it's life, innit. Coz, obviously, you're not a prick. But, you know. It's good to get out, innit? Come out and party. I didn't want to. I'm kind of done with all this. Done with it all. You know? After what happened. But, I've had a fuckin' great night, ain't I?

Danny Well, that's nice, mate.

Ted Obviously I don't mean I actually think you're a prick, Dan.

Danny No. Course not.

Ted You know what I mean though, don't ya?

Danny Mate. I'm a fuckin' mess. Right state. You? You got it sorted. Got a lovely girlfriend, steady job, nice flat. You got it sorted.

Ted It's boring though. That's what I'm saying. You? You party hard. Me? I hardly party. Everything's exciting for you. Behind the bar or on the dole, or doing some shifts here and there. Every day something different for you. No responsibilities. You're off on tour. Alright, maybe only a tour of Croydon,²⁰ but still. Off you go.

Charlotte Oh shut up, the pair of you are doing great. Trust me. You boys are fine. I'm the one should be complaining. I woke up one morning and I was basically my Nan.

Danny What? Nah. You got a steady job, good prospects, you're doing something you love.



Charlotte I spend my life trying to keep fourteen~~year~~olds from sending each other pictures of their cocks.

3-1-1 x2

Danny 'Svery important. If anyone's alright out of the three of us, it's you, Charlotte.

Ted We have had some good times though, ain't we? All us lot. I mean, I don't remember exactly what happened or anything. But we did though, didn't we?

Danny Yeah. We had a right laugh.

Ted And it's good, innit? Have a night out, feels better than I remember. God, I feel, I feel great. It's lovely. It feels lovely.

Danny Well, you deserve it, mate. You work hard, don't ya?

Ted Yeah. I do, you know. I do.

Danny Well, have a night out then.

Ted And it's not like I ain't got plans.

Charlotte What are your plans, Ted?

Ted Well, you know, I got lots of plans. Shit, actually, you know, well, loads. I make plans all the time. I mean, we could have a plan together, couldn't we?

Danny Like what?

Ted Well, I been thinking about a business. My own business, get a start up loan or one a them ...

Charlotte What kind of business?

Ted Oh, something. You know. What do we need? Now? What do we need that we can't get?

Danny Delivery booze.²¹

Ted Ah! Genius! Perfect that. Fuckin' right on the fuckin' nose, bang on the money, perfect. Absolutely fuckin' yes, mate. Twenty-four hour delivery booze, cold beers, curly straws in your cocktail, little sparklers. That's it. We're in business.

Danny Let's do it then, shall we?

Ted Yeah, we'll get one a them vans, like a burger van, but it'll be a bar, dead swish. We'll wear dickie bows. And we'll pull up outside whatever house ordered the booze, and bish bash bosh. There you go.

Danny Mate, we could make a mint.

Ted We could call it Bar Bros

Danny Whose Barbara?

Ted No, like Bar Brothers.

Danny That's a shit name.

Ted I know, but all names are shit when you come up with them; takes a while, don't it, to sink in.

Danny We should call it wine wine wine, like 999.

Ted That's fuckin' shit.

Danny Better than bar bros.

Charlotte We should call it Drink Drivers.

Danny That's wicked! What about Pissed Stop. Like pit stop.

Ted Definitely not calling it pissed stop.

Charlotte Wait. Wait ... I got it ... We should call it –Van Rouge. Like, Vin Rouge.²²

Ted Well, whatever, point is, I wanna do so much. That’s what it is. There’s so much I wanna do, and when it hits you. Like, I swear, the other day, we had it all to come, didn’t we? And now, I hardly see you, but I love you. Pair of you. I love you both. So much. And, I want you to be happy. You know. Both of you. Together.

Charlotte We love you too, Ted. You’re lovely.

Danny Oh... Van Rouge!

Ted Mate, see what was we saying earlier? Well, now’s your chance, right? One chance you said, well, here it is. Seize the moment, mate. It’s a beautiful morning. First day of the rest of your life and all that. And like, all life is, is moments, right? Tiny little moments, and if you don’t make the most of the moment, then you ain’t making the most of your life. Right?

He scrambles to his feet, falls off the sofa, manages to keep the whisky at the right angle so as not to spill any.

Just stretching me legs. I be back soon. Right? Good. Right then. See you in a bit. Lovely.

He staggers offstage. They sit there in silence for a moment.

Charlotte That was weird.

Danny Teddy, innit.

Charlotte

Danny It’s a good party

Charlotte Yeah, it’s alright.

Danny You feel good?

Charlotte Yeah. I’m fucked, Dan.

Danny Me too. Want some of this? (*Cigarette.*)

Charlotte Yeah, go on then.

Danny Amazing, innit.

Charlotte Pretty good, yeah.

Danny Think it's the best fag I ever smoked.

Charlotte It's definitely a contender.

Danny I feel great. Do you feel great?

Charlotte Ted's having fun, ain't he?

Danny Yeah, innit.

Charlotte It's good. It's good to see.

Danny You hear him on the mic earlier?

Charlotte Don't lie! Ted was on the mic?

Danny Yeah. For ages as well.

Charlotte Bless him.

Danny He was pretty good as it goes.

Charlotte What was it he used to call himself?

Danny Tough Ted.

Charlotte Oh yeah, Tough Ted and Tone Deaf! I'd forgotten about that.

Danny Remember when it happened?

Charlotte What?

Danny Tony.

Charlotte What about it?

Danny Ted was there, wasn't he.

Charlotte Does he ever talk about it?

Danny Not to me.

Charlotte Fuckin' hell.

Danny I think it just got him in a different way.

Charlotte Poor guy.

Danny He ain't really come out since.

Charlotte I don't blame him.

Danny But he's having it now, ain't he?

Charlotte It's nice here. Nice just sitting here, innit.

Danny Look, Charlotte, last night was great.

Charlotte Yeah, it was.

Danny I been thinking about it all day.

Charlotte Yeah, me too.

Danny There's so much I wanna say to you.

Charlotte Me too.

Danny But I don't know how.

Charlotte Yeah. I know.

Danny Coz I have, you know, I've really changed.

Charlotte Yeah, so have I.

Danny And it's all gonna be different from now on.

Charlotte Yeah. It is.

Danny Coz I've seen the light, Charlotte. I get it now. I was a knob, but now I'm alright. I'm a fuckin' -. I'm a changed man. I mean it.

Charlotte I know you mean it.

Danny So, what I'm saying is, you've got nothing to be scared of. You can just let yourself go. And it'll all be OK. And you don't have to be angry with me anymore.

Charlotte Yeah, I know.

Danny Coz I love you, Charlotte.

Charlotte I'm leaving Dan. I'm going away.

Danny What?

Charlotte I booked a flight. That's it.

Danny What? What d'you mean you're going away?

Charlotte I'm gonna travel. Live abroad. Teach.

Danny How long for?

Charlotte Year or two.

Danny What? When?

Charlotte In like five hours or something.

Danny What? You joking?

Charlotte No. No, I'm not joking.

Danny Why?

Charlotte Why? Coz I've been in the same part of town my whole life. I could live anywhere in the world, anywhere, but I've never even moved across the river. I want an adventure. I could to go teach somewhere completely new. I could be helping people.

Danny You can't go.

Charlotte Why not?

Danny Well, you teach here. What about your job?

Charlotte It's all sorted.

Danny What about your flat?

Charlotte My sister's gonna take the room.

Danny Well, what about me then?

Charlotte I can't waste anymore of my time waiting for someone else to make me happy.

Danny You don't have to wait.

Charlotte I need to do this, Dan.

Danny Well, *I'll* wait for *you* then. I'll wait for you, Charlotte, coz I love you and I wanna be /

Charlotte You won't wait.

Danny I fuckin' will! I will.

Charlotte You won't, Dan. You say it because it seems like the thing to say. You want it to be a big romantic gesture. But it isn't, I know you too well. You might miss me, after you've got home with some girl you met at a party and she's said something stupid, but you won't wait. Coz the thing is, Dan, you can't put anyone else's feelings in front of your own. It's not that you don't want to, it's that you don't know how.

Danny I do know how. Take as long as you need. I'll be here. And when you come back I'll prove it. I don't want no one else. There's no one else for me. I'll wait for you.

Charlotte I don't want to hear you saying things that sound nice coz you think I want to hear them. I want you to be honest.

Danny I am being honest.

Charlotte It's OK to say – I'm gutted, and I'll miss you. That's enough. You don't have to tell me that you're gonna be heartbroken and fuckin' celibate, coz it's just not true. I know what you're like. I gave you so many chances. And every time you showed me that you didn't really care. Not really. Not when it came down to it.

Danny Don't go, Charlotte. I don't want you to go.

Charlotte Come with me then.

Danny What?

Charlotte Go pack a bag, get your passport. I'll meet you at the airport. Let's do it if you want to, Dan. Let's go. Me and you.

Danny What, now?

Charlotte Yeah.

Danny Well, obviously I can't just, I mean, you know, it's –. The band. We're a unit. I can't just leave. And work, I mean my name's on the rota till next month. And I gotta feed Tibbles²³ while mum's at my auntie's. I can't just go like that. I can't.

Charlotte *stands up, starts getting her things together. They stand looking at each other; he goes to kiss her; she moves away, kisses his face and walks offstage. He stands there looking like he's been kicked in the guts. She doesn't look back. He stares after her until she's gone.*

Ted Where's Charlotte?

Danny Gone.

Ted What do you mean, gone?

Danny I mean gone, mate.

Ted What, gone home, or -?

Danny Nah, like gone, gone away.

Ted Gone away?

Danny She's booked a flight. She's off, mate. Travelling. She's gone. She just. Left.

Ted Fuck.

Danny I know.

Ted You alright?

Danny Yeah.

Ted Ah, mate.

Danny It's alright. It's not a thing.

Ted You ask her to stay?

Danny No.

Ted You gonna go after her?

Danny What? Nah. Nah. I couldn't.

Ted Why not?

Danny What, like, go with her?

Ted Yeah. Why not?

Danny Well, you know, we got this gig next week. You know, a big one. Might be some labels there.

Ted You're joking, right?

Danny No.

Ted Mate. I ain't being funny, right? But I known you a long time, and every week of your life you got a gig, and it's always gonna be a big one, and there's always gonna be some label there, but there never is, is there? It's just some dirty little bar that people think is cool coz the drinks are expensive and no one's fuckin' smiling. Every week, mate. And you ain't been signed yet.

Danny So?

Ted So? Danny. I'm sorry, but your band's no good, mate. I'm sorry. But, mate – your band's fuckin' shit.

Danny What?

Ted I'm sorry, mate.

Danny Prick.

Ted True though, innit?

Danny Fuck off.

Ted Mate, just this morning you're chewing my ear off about this girl. I'm just sat there, trying to have a peaceful beer, give a little time to remembering our mate, and there you are, Charlotte this, Charlotte that; I've changed Ted, I've changed. I want more. I've had an epiphany.

Danny So?

Ted So what?

Danny So, what you saying?

Ted I'm saying, that I told you, Dan, I told you you had to take your chance.

Danny Did you know she was leaving?

Ted You know what your problem is, mate? You just sit around, expecting life to happen for you. Waiting for it all to just land in

your fuckin' lap. You've never failed, Dan. You've never fuckin' failed. You've never tried. You need to fuckin' try at least once, Dan, really fuckin' go for it and try.

Danny What you talking about?

Ted I'm talking about sacrifice, Dan. What life's all about. You gotta grow up, mate. Put yourself second. You know, you don't have a right to happiness, Dan. You can't just, you know, get it. It's hard, innit, life. It's tough. And loving someone, that's hard too. It's not meant to be roses and blow jobs forever. It's fuckin' hard work. It's commitment, mate. It's knowing the kind of day she's had just by hearing the way her key turns in the door.

Danny Alright, Ted. Jesus. Alright.

Ted What? I'm serious. you just need to make a decision, and fuckin' stick to it.

Danny A decision?

Ted That's all it is, Dan. You decide. You say to yourself, I love this girl. I fuckin' love this girl, and then, if a couple years go by and it don't feel the same no more, well fuck it, because you remember your decision. That's what I'm saying about happiness. It's not getting exactly what you want whenever you fuckin' want it with the least possible effort – it's about being alright with what you have. Just that. That's all it is.

Danny *smokes a cigarette, Ted leans his head back against the wall.*

Ted You should go after her, mate.

Danny I can't.

Ted *rushes.*

Ted Why not?

Danny Are you happy, Ted?

Ted Rushing my fuckin' tits off, ain't I? I'm well happy.

Danny You know what I mean, Ted. I don't mean now, I mean like, in general.

Ted Oh, *in general*? No, course not. No one is. No one we know anyway. Look at us all, eating these little funny buttons just so we can smile at each other without looking away.

Danny You are looking away.

Ted Am I? Oh.

Danny Coz I ain't happy, mate. I ain't. I mean, I'm alright, I don't mean to get all fuckin' emo about it but /

Ted I tell you what it is, right? It's the little things that make me happy. Stupid things. Like, you know, for example— I hate my job, right? I hate it. I wake up in the morning and I feel sick about my life. But I like it when I see two cars the same colour parked next to each other. I like smoking cigarettes on cold days. I like it when someone makes me a cup of tea, just how I like it, without me having to ask. I like it when Sally laughs with her mouth full. I like quiz shows. I like it that elephants bury their dead. I'll never be anybody's fuckin' hero, right? I'll never be celebrated, and I'll never look at myself in the mirror and say that's right hot shot, you're the fuckin' man. But I like listening to the radio. And fuck it, I like it when Sally's brother invites me round to watch the rugby, even though I hate the fuckin' rugby, coz it shows he's trying. Know what I mean? Do you, Dan? Do you know what I mean?

They sit there, Danny thinks about what Ted has said. Ted seems a bit spent after the outburst. They smoke a cigarette.

Danny Come on then, Ted; you buying me breakfast or what?

Chorus Three

One Everything was

Two Brighter,

One There was no more exhaustion.

Three The moments were all glorious, and full of importance.

Two But now your jaw's clenched,

Three You feel sick

Two And a bit like you're

One Falling,

Three As your

One Night

Two Steps

Three On the toes of their

One Morning –

Three These

One Other

Two People

One On the street

Three Walking,

Two People who've slept and got up.

One The rain's

Two Pouring,

Three You feel the guilt chasing you down,

One Your soul's

Three Roaring

Two That there must be a way to be more than this.

Three Life in a city of awkwardness –

One We should have been monoliths,

Three Could have had everything,

Two We know we've got more to give.

One Our skin holds our bones in, our organs are moaning,

66 Wasted

Three Coz it feels like

Two Nothing means nothing,

Three But we need to feel

All Something.

One Three friends, knee deep in the weekend,

Two In their own ways, they're all steeped in pretence

One And what they want's

Three More,

Two Something real they can

Three Touch –

One Well – you only know what's enough,

Three When you know what's more than enough.

Scene Four

Greasy spoon café. Ted reads the tabloids. Cups of tea or coffee in front of them. No food.

Ted You hear what that woman said when we got off the bus?

Danny What woman?

Ted She had her kid with her, and we walked past and the kid looked at me, and the woman put her hand over his eyes and said 'don't look at the man'.

Danny Fuck.

Ted We must look a right fright.

Danny You look lovely, babe.

Ted Prick.

Danny You think you could eat?

Ted Worth a try, ain't it?

Danny Yeah. S'pose.

Ted I feel horrible.

Danny Me too.

Ted Was a good night, though, wa'n't it?

Danny Yeah, mate. Great night.

Ted I do feel horrible though.

Pause. They drink their tea. Ted looks at menu. Danny picks up the paper, looks through it.

Ted What's happening in the real world, then?

Danny (*flicking through the pages*) Oh, you know, war, dead civilians, fear-mongering about religious fundamentalism, footballer that cheated on his wife, someone's tits, couple criminally insane school children. Parrot found in Putney²⁴ that can rap the first verse of the Fresh Prince of Bel Air²⁵ theme tune.

Ted Usual then.

Danny I hate reading the paper. Don't matter where you go in the world, does it, everywhere's fucked. Everything's fucked.

Ted Pie 'n' mash?²⁶ That be too much, you reckon?

Danny Makes you think though, dunnit? We might think we got it bad here, like, think we're struggling, but we're fine. Look at us. We're fine. Compared to some of the shit going on. This is luxury, mate; you know what I mean?

Ted Probably is too much, innit?

Danny There's always someone worse off than you though, ain't there?

Ted Depends how big the portions are I s'pose.

Danny It's always safer to look around and say, no matter how fucked I am, it could be worse.

Ted Look, that guy's got a jacket potato. Maybe that's what I need. Beans though? Couldn't manage beans.

Danny And that's it, innit? That's the whole point? As long as you think that, why would you risk it?

Ted If in doubt, head for the classic.

Danny Changing things, I mean. Making things better.

Ted Full English.²⁷

Danny (*still looking through the paper*) I mean, this can't be what it's all been for... *This...*

Ted That's it, mate. That's the one. Stick to what you know, eh? Don't break it if it ain't fixed. Full English, no beans, extra hash brown. Bosh. You ready to order yet or what?

Danny I could go meet her, couldn't I? At the airport. Just sit and have a coffee with her or something? I don't have to get on the plane. Just go be there. Show her. That's showing her, ain't it?

Ted What you having?

Danny I'll have what you're having.

Ted Nope. No, you don't. I ain't having you throwing a strop coz I didn't get you no bubble and squeak.²⁸

Danny I just can't seem to get it right with her.

Ted You're more fussy than you think, you know.

Danny No, I'm not.

Ted Tomatoes?

Danny Fuckin' hate tomatoes.

Ted See?

Danny Everything I do, I always end up the cunt.

Ted White or brown?

Danny What?

Ted Bread.

Danny I feel horrible.

Ted (*phone ringing*) Sorry, mate. It's Sal. I gotta, hold on ... (*In a coupley, sickly sweet voice we haven't heard from him until now.*) Hello darlin'. You alright? Oh, lovely. Great. Yeah. Yeah I'm fine thanks, babe. Just in the caff²⁹ now, yeah, it was nice yeah, we went for a couple of pints, then watched a film, nothing special ... Just me and Dan ... What, now? IKEA?³⁰ Well, I was gonna just have a bit of brekkie, and then just go back to Dan's for a ... yeah? Yeah, I know I seen him all night, but you know. It's been a while since ... Oh yep, no, I know, the curtains. I know. Course. I'm sorry ... yep. No, OK. Well, I'll walk up now then ... yep, OK, on the corner. No, I won't be. Alright then, babe. Yep, love you too. Yep. Alright. Bye, darling. Bye ...

Sorry, mate, I gotta go. Sorry. It's 'er, you know. Duty calls.

Danny Yeah, yeah. All good.

Ted You'll be alright, wont ya?

Danny Fine mate, don't be silly.

Ted You gonna, you be about later? Maybe see you in the pub?

Danny Yeah, give us a shout.

Ted Alright, mate. I had a great night, Dan. We should do it more often, feels like it's been ages. You know what I mean?

Danny Yeah, too long.

Ted I meant it, earlier.

Danny What?

Ted You're my best mate, Dan.

Danny Ain't so bad yourself, mate.

Ted Look, I'm gonna go follow my girlfriend round IKEA for the next four fuckin' hours, I feel like I just swallowed a planetarium or something. I'm fuckin' munted, and I'm gonna go and hold Sally's hand and look at curtains and toothbrush holders and lampshades and it's gonna be fuckin' tragic. But I'm gonna do it. Coz that's what she needs me to do. Know what I mean?

70 Wasted

Danny Planetarium?

Ted Dan, what the fuck are you doing here?

Danny What?

Ted Sat here in the same old fuckin' caff again.

Danny Up until a minute ago, mate, it was good enough for you.

Ted Go and find her, Dan. If that's what you want. Make the decision, and go for it.

Danny I don't know, Ted. I don't know. I'm alright, don't worry about me. I know what I'm doing. You want another pill³¹ fore you get to IKEA?

Ted What? Nah, I'm done mate. I'm fuckin' done.

Danny Suit yourself.

Ted Later on then, Dan.

Danny Later on, Ted.

Sits there for a moment, staring ahead, sounds of the café get really loud. Grease frying and the radio and people talking. He drops a pill. Winces.

Danny You're lucky really.

If you'd have lived 'til now you would have just got fat and boring like the rest of us. You wouldn't have been no different.

You never got old enough to see your mate become the weirdo with a drugs lisp, looking like he's just found fishbones in his mouth, nodding to himself. In a Slammin Vinyl³² bomber jacket.

It used to feel like we was doing something that no one else had ever done. But really we was just getting fucked. And all them other kids that weren't cool enough to hang about with us, them ones we sold screwed up bits of clingfilm to for a tenner a go, they all grew up nicely, didn't they? They went off to uni and reinvented themselves and now they're doctors, replacing people's limbs in war zones, or they're professional cricketers, or they're working

in the fuckin' city, blowing a ton on coke every night and fuckin' women that wouldn't even look at me if I was hanging in a gallery.

So you're lucky. Coz if you was still here, you'd have a habit, or depression, or anxiety attacks, or all three, and you'd be making secret plans to run away and start again in a new fuckin' country where no one knows how much of a fuckin' wreck you are, or, you'd be up to your neck in debt, fuckin' a bird that thinks you're a dick and checking your Twitter³³ every twenty-two seconds to see if anyone's said anything about your fuckin' shit band. We used to be the fuckin' boys, mate. Now, the highlight of my day is taking a good shit.

I miss her already. I never meant to take her for granted, Tony. But you do, don't you. It's like air. You never know how much it means to you till you're drowning. And then it's too late.

If I could turn around and be the Danny that I want to be, the Danny that lives in my head, then shit, she'd never stop smiling. But the thing is, mate, I ain't that guy, I'm this guy. Alone in the caff with the horrors coming on, still ain't come up off the last pill I done, wishing I could be braver and just sweep her off her feet. But she's gone, ain't she. She's had enough, off she fuckin' trots. She's the only person that ever made me happy, Tony, the only person that ever really knew me, and she thinks I'm a cunt.

And alright I probably am. But who fuckin' isn't? You were a cunt. Who really, deep down inside, isn't a complete cunt? At least I'm ready to try.

I want to be on stage in front of thousands of screaming fans, doing something fuckin' great, and smiling like it's no big deal. But every time I sit down to practice my guitar, I end up fantasising about sell-out shows while I play the same shitty riff I been playing for years. And you know what, it's kind of the same with her.

And as it is I got nothing going on. Not really. Ted thinks I got this glamorous lifestyle, but it's all bullshit, I hang out with people that spend the whole night looking over my shoulder in case something more interesting's happening behind me, and they all think my band's a joke, I mean, they think we're actually joking, but we're not. And all my songs are fuckin' shit. Well, 'she purrs

my motorbike' is actually pretty good but fuck sake, I work in a bar and I have an epiphany every other fuckin' day, then as soon as I got a couple beers in me I'm back to square one, repeating the same conversations I've had a thousand times over and creeping around looking for someone to give me a line and I don't want to be this man anymore.

Thing is, in a few hours – I'll be staring at her name on my phone, too late to call, coz she'll be gone, and I'll just be sat there like a prick, staring at the shape of the letters, the way they fit together, so perfect, just like her, and I'll sit there, wishing I could show her that when I'm with her I feel so fuckin' real, like, not pretending nothing, just who I am. I feel like I can be the man I want to be. And I do want to be that man, Tony. I do. But for some reason. For some fuckin' reason.

And then I'll catch my reflection in between the letters of her name, face like a car crash, and I'll make the same fuckin' promises I make every morning. Tell myself I'm changing things. That this is it.

But then I suppose, if we could all be the men we wanted to be, this caff would be full of secret agents and movie stars, wouldn't it? As it is, Tony, it's that guy drinking milk and talking to the walls, that guy eating beans with no teeth, and me. All of us, regretting the decisions we never had the guts to make.

And she's gone. She's fuckin' gone.

So you're lucky really.

Chorus Four

Two And so,

One We have music,

Two We have love,

One We have each other,

Three But it ain't enough.

Two So we get ruined, taking drugs to feel,

One And it feels

All Good.

Two Coz in these vacant sub-day days that turn the blood,

One You touch my face,

Three You wake me up.

One We love this city, it raised us up,

Two Told us to brace ourselves against the flood.

Three It taught us all we

Two Know,

One And this is all we came to

Two Show –

Three That times are strange,

Two As all times are,

Three Our minds are strained,

Two Our eyes

Three Wine dark,

One Our lives are played like dice or cards,

Three But our hearts are good, and wear their scars.

Two We look up, but there's no

One Stars,

Two Just streetlights burning down on broken cars

One And in us, churning guts,

Three Unspoken

Two Trust,

One Closed eyes with our minds

74 Wasted

Two Opened up –

One The old mantra learned that soaks us up –

Three It's best if you don't hope for much.

Scene Five

Charlotte *is sitting in the park, looking at Tony's tree. Danny walks up, sees her. She's swigging from a bottle of whisky, he's carrying a can of K cider.*³⁴ *It's late afternoon.*

Danny Charlotte?

Charlotte Alright, Dan.

Danny What you doing here? I thought you was

Charlotte I come to say goodbye.

Danny What time's the flight?

Charlotte I missed it.

Danny What?

Charlotte It leaves in an hour.

Danny So, you ain't going?

Charlotte No. I ain't.

Danny That's great Charlotte. How come?

Starts rolling a joint

Charlotte Loads of reasons. Mainly coz I'm fucked, and the idea of customs was making me wanna be sick. Honestly, I feel like my face is doing interpretive dance.

Danny It's ballet.

Charlotte What, The Nutcrackhead?

Danny No, ballet.

Lighting the joint.

Charlotte I ain't been here all year, you know?

Danny No?

Charlotte No.

Danny He wouldn't mind.

Charlotte And I was thinking, the best thing I can do to celebrate his memory, is make something of my life. Know what I mean, Dan?

Danny Yeah, for real. Definitely.

Charlotte I'm gonna go back to school and teach. Properly. Coz I love them kids. And they deserve so much more. They really do. Last thing they need is another person walking out on them. I'm gonna put all my energy into it, Dan. I'm gonna be a teacher. A really fuckin' good one.

Danny Yeah, you should do that, Charlotte.

Taking out some coke and doing a bump³⁵ off the corner of a card. He offers one to Charlotte. She goes for it.

Charlotte Or something. I don't know. Something.

Danny Yeah. I think you're right. And like, I know what you mean, coz, I been thinking too, I'm gonna do it you know? With the band, and all that, I'm gonna fuckin' do it. It's gonna be huge.

Charlotte Yeah?

Danny Yeah. Hard work, innit. Just gotta keep working at it.

Charlotte That's right, yeah.

Danny Practice innit, six hours a day. Straight. And I'm thinking about a martial art too. For the discipline.

Charlotte Oh yeah?

Danny Yeah, the breathing and that, the posture. I think I might start training.

Charlotte Yeah, you should. That'd be good for you.

Danny Yeah. Or yoga or something.

Charlotte Yeah?

Danny Yeah. Might start going classes.

Charlotte Yoga, yeah?

He passes the joint. Swigs from his can. Lines up another bump. And one for her.

Danny And I'm gonna cut down on the sniff⁸⁶ and that. Cut down on all of it. Stop wasting my time. Know what I mean? Get my shit together.

Charlotte Yeah. Me too.

Danny And you reckon, if you're sticking around, could I, like, another time maybe, take you out? Like, we could take things slow, couldn't we? If you're staying, there's no hurry is there. Next week, the week after?

Charlotte I don't think so, Dan.

Danny Coz, you know, I'm changing things. I am. I'll show you, Charlotte, I'm sorting myself out.

Charlotte Yeah, I am too, Dan. I am.

Danny Does make you think though don't it, day like today.

Charlotte Yeah. It does.

Danny I do mean it, I am, I'm sorting myself out.

Charlotte Me too, Dan. Definitely.

Danny (*surprised*) Fuck.

Charlotte What?

Danny I feel fucked, you know.

Charlotte (*happy*) Me too, fuckin' wasted.

They have another bump each. Swig some whisky. Danny puts his arm around her.

Chorus Five

One How many times you dreamed of

Two and Three Something,

Three Then told yourself your dreams ain't

One and Two Nothing?

Two The thing is though, your dreams are

One and Three More

One Than just something that came before you shook them off,

Three Your dreams are worth pursuing,

Two Mate,

Three You do deserve everything you dare to want,

One But you'll never

One and Two Fly

Two 'Til you're prepared to

Two and Three Jump.

One So here's the thing then –

Three Here's the closing –

One Once,

Two That breaking wave was just a frozen raindrop

Three Waiting for its cloud to open and let it fall,

One So let it call your name –

Two That thing inside you screaming,

Three There is

All More

Two To you than your routine.

78 Wasted

One We came here to share the feeling

Three That until you live the things you're dreaming

Two They'll stay

One Private, behind

Two Eyelids –

Three That's the point – we came to speak it –

One All the things you hope in secret you could be –

All You are –

Two We mean it.

Three Whatever moves you – you must chase it –

One Stand before it – mate – embrace it

Two Life wants you – it beckons – makes itself immense –

Three Respect it – take it in your arms,

One Connect and face it.

Three Your life is for

All Much more

One Than getting

All Wasted.

*We see projections of supermarket aisles, pubs, people in a party, then riots, revolts, soldiers, burning cars etc, interspersed with the three characters, buying cigarettes, lying on the floor of their flat, watching telly, time-lapse footage of London, pizza boxes, traffic jams, market stalls, queue in the bank, then **Ted**, in **IKEA**, pushing a trolley loaded up with loads of massive flat pack boxes, struggling, Egypt after the revolution, Tony's tree, kids in a classroom, visuals flicker off, like when you turn a telly off with a remote, goes to a flat line, then a dot, then flicker back on and there's a camera inside an **IKEA** box, **Ted** opens it, starts pulling out planks of wood, it flickers, the box closes, back to blackness.*

ok

*Music still playing, the characters are back on stage in their first positions, it's Monday again, nothing changes, **Ted's** still at work, **Charlotte** is still in the classroom, **Danny** is still up sniffing lines with his mates. They look tired. Lonely.*

End.

Notes

- 1 Magic FM: An independent radio station, based in London that plays popular music. This station is also referenced on the track 'The Truth' on Tempest's album *Everybody Down*.
- 2 Babycham: A sparkling alcoholic wine drink, popular in the 1960s and 1970s.
- 3 Jacked: A colloquial term meaning 'stole' or 'thieved'.
- 4 Spliffs: Marijuana cigarettes.
- 5 Rock pipes: Glass pipes used to smoke rocks of crack cocaine.
- 6 Skunk: A type of potent marijuana.
- 7 Pissed: Colloquial term meaning 'inebriated by alcohol'.
- 8 Custard creams: A popular sandwich biscuit, with a firm cream centre.
- 9 Skinning up: Colloquial term meaning to roll a marijuana cigarette.
- 10 MDMA: Monosodium methyl arsonate, a powder form of the recreational drug ecstasy.
- 11 Joint: Another colloquial term for a marijuana cigarette.
- 12 Peckham: An area of south-east London, known in the late twentieth century as an ethnically diverse working-class district it became increasingly fashionable in the 2010s and beyond as a result of gentrification and the wider urban development of London.
- 13 Ketamine: A hallucinogenic recreational drug.
- 14 Killing each other over postcodes: Refers to gang violence happening between young people from different districts of London. A postcode is a set of letters and numbers used to signify particular districts for the purposes of mail delivery.
- 15 Tescos: A popular supermarket chain.
- 16 Rizla: A popular brand of cigarette rolling paper.
- 17 Munted: Colloquial phrase meaning inebriated on drugs and/or alcohol.
- 18 Bass heavy: Colloquial phrase meaning that one can feel the throb on the bass of the music.
- 19 MDMA ~~tricks~~: The physical signs that you've consumed MDMA.
- 20 Croydon: A large town in south London, not glamorous, a flashpoint for the 2011 riots discussed in the CONTEXT section of this introduction.
- 21 Booze: Colloquial term for alcohol.
- 22 Vin Rouge: French for 'red wine'.
- 23 Tibbles: A cliché name for a pet cat.
- 24 Putney: A district in south-west London.

- 25 Fresh Prince of Bel Air: A popular 1990s sitcom, fronted by the actor Will Smith, with a novelty hip hop theme-tune.
- 26 Pie 'n' Mash: A traditional London dish of meat pie and mashed potatoes.
- 27 Full English: A traditional cooked breakfast usually including bacon, sausage, egg, beans and toast, with other optional elements such as tomato, back pudding, hash browns etc.
- 28 Bubble and squeak: Traditional British breakfast dish of fried leftover vegetables, usually including cabbage and potatoes.
- 29 Caff: Colloquial local pronunciation of 'café'.
- 30 IKEA: A popular furniture store.
- 31 Pill: Slang for a recreational drug in tablet form, usually ecstasy.
- 32 Slammin Vinyl: A brand specializing in rave and hard core music, runs a record label, events and sells merchandise.
- 33 Twitter: A social media platform where users communicate using short messages called 'tweets'.
- 34 K Cider: A cheap brand of cider with a very high alcohol content.
- 35 Doing a bump: Snorting a small amount of cocaine to ease the feeling of withdrawal.
- 36 Sniff: Colloquial term for cocaine.





