

NOTES to reviewers- The accompanying commentary will be edited when submitted for the REF – this is still a work in progress.

Lightstreams extends on Mazzilli's ongoing research and playwriting practice into socially engaged drama and her investigation of the experiences of migrants in post-Brexit Britain. Placing herself as an invested author as a first-generation migrant, she has developed this script through a process that blends auto-ethnography, verbatim and fiction. The script is partially based on her own experiences as a first-time mother with a toddler suffering from anxiety during Covid as well as on interviews with first generation migrant health and social-care workers from London and South-East, conducted by a PhD student in Sociology and Mazzilli herself in 2023.

The process of developing the script followed innovatively a cyclical approach that switches from auto-ethnographical/fictional material to verbatim and backwards: videoed extracts of the first scratch performance of the script elicited responses from migrant health and social-care workers and some of their responses and experiences were integrated back into the script. In subsequent drafts, issues such as micro-aggression, domestic violence and family conflicts raised by the interviews became more prominent and were used in replotting the script.

At an aesthetic level, furthermore, Mazzilli investigates the limits of narrative linearity through a structure that moves forward by presenting fragments of main events in the characters' lives. It also tests the limits of dialogical drama by exploiting the monological form through interconnected monologues interspersed with short dialogical exchanges. This develops on the idea that monologues can be powerful tools for exploring the complexities of migrant experiences (Yana Meerzon, 2020). Direct address to the audience and breaking of the fourth wall are also employed in a Brechtian fashion.

Logline

When during a period of global crisis Maurice, a young migrant carer, is forced to choose between his family and having to live in the care home where he works, he struggles to keep his marriage and the relationship with his two-year old son afloat.

Synopsis

Maurice, early 30s, a care worker in an elderly care-home, originally from a country outside the British Isles, is a very proud man having made a small town on the Suffolk coastline his home, where he works as a care worker in an elderly care-home. Hermia, also early 30s,

Maurice's wife, originally from the same country as Maurice, struggles with motherhood and the fact that she is very often left alone with their two-year-old. Darya, a woman in her late 70s, a resident of the care home also originally from another country outside the British Isles, is very fond of Maurice and Hermia, who occasionally visits her at the care home.

During a period of global crisis, a strange disease that spreads very fast forces people to lock themselves into their homes. Maurice is faced with a difficult choice, of either quitting his job and stay with his family or moving into the care-home, to care for Darya and other residents, thus leaving his family behind. Maurice chooses the latter bringing his marriage to a crisis point and forcing Hermia to a period of isolation. When the crisis is over, a year later, Hermia tries to rescue their crumbling marriage while dealing with Maurice, who is no longer himself but still goes back to work, day in and day out. Four years later, when the British government announces restrictions for migrant care workers, their life has already changed, and Maurice finds himself on his own vulnerable and without a family.

Reach

The play had four public sharings (a mixture of scratch performances and staged readings): at the Lakeside Theatre in November 2022, at the Omnibus Theatre, London in January 2023, at the Bush Theatre Studio in July 2023, Mercury Theatre rehearsal room in July 2025. It reached out around 100 audiences and at the Mercury Theatre the staged reading was followed by a public panel with a local counsellors, local charities and experts. It was longlisted for the Theatre 503 International Playwrighting Competition in 2025.

The play received one Arts Council National Lottery Project Grant, three University of Essex (ESRC IAA Funds, one University of Essex QR Fund, and one Centre for Public and Policy Engagement (CPPE) Fund. Parts of the play and short-films based on sections of the play have been used to create an EDI toolkit that will be piloted with the Essex County Council in Spring 2026 and to this end a Enterprise Project Fund was awarded in 2025/26.

Sources

Meerzon, Yana. (2020). *Performance, Subjectivity, Cosmopolitanism* London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020.

Lightstreams

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Characters

Hermia, a woman in her early 30s originally from a country outside the British Isles.

Maurice, Hermia's husband, early 30s, a care worker in an elderly care-home, originally from a country outside the British Isles.

Darya, a woman in her late 70s, originally from a country outside the British Isles.

Location: East-Anglia, the Suffolk coastline.

Time: a period of global crisis.

Settings

Internal:

Living room (a sofa, a chair and a child cot)

A bedroom in care home (a bed and a lamplight)

A room behind a glassed door

The kitchen of carehome

External:

A park bench.

There are no entrances or exits unless stated.

Notes on the play

The fragmented structure of the play is intentional. This is not a naturalist play and is partially based on interviews with first generation migrant health and social-care workers from London and South-East.

A slash (/) indicates where the next line of dialogue interrupts or overlaps.

Space between paragraphs marks a breather, a very slight beat, a transition, a shift, change of topic, action change etc. Performers/director should follow these as they see fit.

'Cont'd' marks the beginning of a scene/section in mid-conversation/action, continued from the scene as indicated.

Chapter 1.1

Maurice stands at the edge of the stage, which represents the front-door outside his house. He wears a dark green fleece jacket over a carer uniform, of which only the light purple cotton trousers are visible. He directly addresses the audience.

Maurice

Don't fool yourself.

Dude, this is the real deal. There's nothing to complain about. Been here let's say 5 months.

It's me home really. I came here with nothing. Now I've a comfortable house. If you work hard, you get your reward. No cheating and all. I live by the sea. A small town by the sea. Neat!

It's not only about money.

It's about fairness. It's indeed a fair and tolerant place.

Bro'! when I look at the Dover cliffs. Beautiful and high and white. Pure whiteness.

I'm so proud. So proud for me kid and all.. me little man! For sure.

Don't fool gg?

You've got to adapt.

I'm happy to work in all sorts of places. For now, I work in a care-home.

You've got to adapt.

And with my so-called compatriots, they get together and talk our tongue. If you keep talking your tongue, how do you expect people to understand you?

Don't fool yourself.

Beat.

They've queens and kings, the empire, a strange obsession with the Second World War and the Nazis. You've got the posh ones with their charity work and the council estate doing nothing work. And Thatcher wiped away all the mining industry and then it's all run by Etonians, who look like bankers to me. But it's not all about royalties and politics and class.

Pause.

Would I die for this country, then? Big question. I wouldn't die for mine. That's for sure, but you got to be proud of something...

In any case. I am proud. When they asked me to care.. and I'm proud.

Don't fool yourself!

Lights fade.

Chapter 1.2

*A sea-side town. Seagulls are heard in the distance. Morning time. Downstage right: living room. **Hermia** and **Maurice** are having breakfast at one table. **Maurice** still wears the same fleece and trousers. A cot is visible. **Hermia** rocks a child up and down in her arms. Child's cries are audible throughout.*

Hermia Don't you think we should talk to someone about it?

Maurice offers her a hug. Hermia accepts the hug.

Hermia Gently. About what you said?

Maurice still hugging Hermia slowly shakes his head and smiles at her.

Hermia Gently. About what I said?

Maurice nods and smiles.

Hermia Gently. About what you did?

Maurice still hugging Hermia shakes his head, still smiling at her.

Hermia Slightly annoyed. About what I did?

Maurice nods. Hermia slowly frees herself from him and goes to pick the baby.

Hermia I don't even know why you don't talk to me.

Maurice sighs and tries to hug her again, but she hands over the baby to Maurice, who takes it into his arms.

Hermia Ok..I meant I don't know why we don't talk without shouting.

Maurice lets out a loud sigh trying to soothe the child, who is crying even harder.

Hermia You know exactly what I mean.

Maurice looks at her, shrugs and kisses the baby.

Chapter 1.3

*Same day. Night-time. Stage split in two. **Hermia** is in the living room stage right; **Maurice** is in a room in a care home stage left.*

***Hermia** is looking at the child's cot.
Child's cries are heard as background
sound/score.*

***Maurice**, wearing a carer uniform, a
light purple tunic and trousers, attends
the bed where the patient is not visible.
'A stream of light beyond the window
wants to take me to the streets,' she
says. Nobody's walking the street. I say.*

I say.... and I know you were born to drama as you cried out your way into the world. Like all babies do. They all cry as they take their first breath into the world.

Their first breath is like that of a tragic hero. Necessary.

Fighting for an impossible survival. As we are all meant to die one day. On our own.

Here. I keep you inside. So, you won't. I hope. Wishful thinking. I didn't go through all that trouble for you to surrender to your destiny.

Not so soon. At least. Or so I say. But God knows how many times my hands would have been capable of ...

Your neck looked so easy. Snap. Like a young tree branch. Then, a snapped chicken neck..

'This light wants me to follow *HER*. It wants me to get out,' she says and I say, 'But I can't see it'.

Don't fool yourself.

'There's nowhere else to go,' I say.

'I'm here for you,' I say.

The world ain't an open oyster. You might as well stay put. I think.

Don't fool yourself. 'I help. I will help. Do you call it destiny? I call it...' I say.

Maurice turns his face towards the door, stage left, as if looking for something.

I'm capable and honest and fair.

Turns his attention back to the bed.

'Especially at your age. You're young and strong,' she says.

I no longer have these thoughts...I
promise you. So, I tell myself.

But for now, we've each other during
our waking nights. And tragedy is all we
have.

Decide what time.
Start winding down.
Set limits.

Be kind.
Give them their favourite toy.

Leave a beaker of water within reach...
If your child gets up....
Be kind and ...

Be kind and ...
Leave a dim light on, if necessary.
Try to be consistent.

Don't fool yourself.
'I promise you. I'm here to help,' I say.

The day'll come and they'll need our
help. I think. I don't say it.

'No need to be tragic. If the day comes
.. and I stay and help,'
I say.

We all have our limits, but I know I can
do more.

I think.

'It's important to care. The more you
care the more you heal,' I say.

Please smile. 'Here you go. It's your
water,' I say.

*He offers water in a plastic cup to the
invisible patient.*

It's all about kindness. I think.
'So much kindness,' she says.

'Do you want some light?' I ask.

Keep taking them back.
Try to be consistent.
Leave a dim light ONLY if necessary.

Bed again with as little fuss as possible.
Repeat for several nights.

So they say...
Try to be consistent.

Repeat for several nights.

Repeat for several nights.
Try to be consistent.

Do not smile.
No eye contact!

Repeat for several nights. And I count
the seconds. And I give in more easily
than I should.

Like an angel, she looks at me. The
light is all what she needs.

'My father had dark Mediterranean hair
and skin, like yours,' she says. 'Where
is my light? The light,' she asks. And
she keeps asking. The room is of light
but for her it is as dark as the deep
winter nights.

He turns away towards the door.
This is what she does and says every
night.

Consistent. Every night.
'Every night I need my light,' she says.

She repeats every night and also during
the day..

Why does she hardly smile? I think.

I still remember my grandma's smiles.

They were kind and honest.

Because your smiles are so beautiful
with your long eyelashes, like lions' long
manes.

The girls, or boys, will go crazy for
these one day. Yet your tears are so..

So, so, loud and wet! Your eyelashes,
then, look more like some sort of
kitchen mop.

Dripping water, a shapeless bundle of
hair. *Laughs.*

As I keep putting you back, you sob
your eyes out.

The worst kind of drama.

What shall I say?
Seriously? You have the ability to pass
from crying and smiling, and reverse,
from one moment to the next. I don't
understand.

Beat.

Give me a break. Is it too much to ask?
Lights fade.

It made my heart ...

Kind and honest. I've never had seen
such smiles like her anymore.

He walks towards the door.

As I close the door behind me..

As I close the door behind me, I look..
About to exit.

At her eyes.

He turns back looking at the bed.

Who can say? One day when I bring her
to bed, I finally see HER big full smile...
'You should look for the light'. Every
night. And every day. She says.

He exits.

Chapter 1.4

Same as Chapter 1.2.

Hermia I DO NOT have emotional outbursts.

Maurice tries to hug her. The child cries harder.

Hermia It is not because I don't sleep at night, because I don't!

Maurice tries again. The child cries even harder, which makes Hermia even more distressed.

Hermia But I am not being paranoid.

Maurice tries to take the baby from her arms. Hermia rejects the invite and is visibly distressed because she cannot comfort her own child.

Hermia They just don't want to tell us the truth and the truth is...

Maurice stares at her and sighs. Hermia puts the child into the cot and the child cries even harder.

Hermia Something horrible is about to come and it's nothing to do with global warming or the migration crisis.

Maurice turns away. Hermia looks at the cot where the child continues to cry. Then she looks back at Maurice.

Hermia It's something more sinister.

Maurice is about to leave, then stops without looking at her.

Hermia Please listen to me.

Maurice crosses the stage. The child's cries are now cacophonous noises in the background.

Hermia You've a choice. We have a choice! This isn't our own country! This IS NOT EVEN our own country! Don't go. Don't...

Maurice slams the door exiting stage right.

Hermia Don't slam the door...at ...me. You take your job too seriously.

Hermia attends to the child and picks it up. She sobs.

Chapter 1.5

Night. Same as Chapter 1.3. The stage is split in two: living room stage right and care home bedroom, stage left.

Hermia, still in the living room, sits on the floor in front of a sofa. She is trying to open a music box. When opened, the top of the music box shows a man and a woman dancing together.

Maurice attends the bed, the same as chapter 1.3. The patient is not visible.

What love? You see where love is and
where unlove is and you have lost
sense of it a long ago. You see nothing.

I still see these shut walls.

I loved these walls. This closet of mine. I
gasp many times for air. But I made this
cave with my own hands. With my own
voice. My own song.

Our child grows up here. I chose many
times not to scream for help. You chose
many times to leave.

But you always come back. And you
close the doors. Behind. And we dance
the dance of heavens and hells under
one roof.

We've been in a lifelong of lockdowns.

Today. Tonight, she's well confused. I
call out once. Twice. Maybe. I wait.
Patience is the virtue of the strong. I
think.

She soon grabs my hand and she... Her
grip is so strong. It's heavy like a chain.
She screams for help.
'Help!'.

'I can't resist it. It's only, then, under the
clarity of the light. Why doesn't it follow
us?'

She shouts.

I take my hand away from her.

I realise her hands are shaking. Badly.
What happens to her today?

Soon afterwards. I switch on the big
light (*he goes to the backstage wall and
switches on the big light*) and I see all
the scratches and bruises. On her face.
'What's happened to you today?' I ask.

What love? You ask me so many times. *He goes to attend the bed.*

And I say love is more than us.

I close the doors too. I made this dancing
box for us.

'What's happened to you day?'

I ask but she speaks fast. She says

...She says..

My English isn't good enough. I don't
understand. Her.

Shall I now open it? After so many
years of screams and rebuttals. Shall I
open? Or shall I leave it shut for ever?

I don't remember what she says. I only
remember her mouth is wide open. *Out
of breath.*

I could not understand my life without it.
I smell its walls that contain us. And I
find comfort in its mustiness.

I don't know why I say nothing. Maybe I
say something.

These walls are us. Our body are its
pillars. There is harmony to the music
and all.

She grabs my hand again and doesn't
let me go. I feel her fingers into my skin.

And as we dance even violence makes
sense. Then?

I try to get away. I only wanted to
soothe her. She still screams so much.
She says....She says....

.

Then, I tried to comfort him as I try to
comfort you now.

I don't recognise her anymore.

Out of breath. She says. I can't say
what she says. *Frantic. Long pause.*
'Go away you're a stranger to me.
Help! Help!' she screams and screams.
'There is a stranger with me. A Man. He
isn't from this country. He's a for-ei-gn-
er!'

*He moves away from the bed, still
looking at her.*

I move away. Quickly.

He is visibly disturbed.

(singing voice)

Then. Sleep. Sleep, my golden-haired
boy. Sleep. I am here to attend ...
to your needs and mine.
My love for you, my child, is pure.
More than pure.

Hermia drops the music box. Black out.

She stops screaming. She's calmer
now.

'Here you go,' she says. 'Back to where
you came from,'

She says again.

'Go back to where you are from,' she
says.

Like a dagger into the stomach.

I was there to attend. To care.

You aren't from around here either. You
talk like my nan, if my nan spoke
English.

A very bad English.

I think. I don't say it to her.

Beat.

The old lady sounds like my nan.

I loved my nan.

My love for her was pure. More than
pure.
But she ain't my nan.
This ain't my country.
'This ain't your country either' I want to
say to her.
I say nothing.
He exits visibly upset.

Chapter 1.6

*Living room. Nighttime. **Hermia** sleeps crouched at the bottom of the sofa with the music box in tatters in front of her. **Maurice**, still visibly upset and frantic, enters wearing the fleece jacket over his carer uniform. He checks the cot, Hermia and makes himself comfortable on the sofa. He addresses the audience.*

Don't fool yourself. There's nowhere else to go.
Even for you. The world ain't an open oyster. You might as well stay put.
I will help. Especially at my age. I'm young and strong 'cause there is no place like
home

Frantic.

It's about fairness. It's indeed a fair and tolerant place.
Bro'! when I look at the Dover cliffs. Beautiful and high and white. Pure whiteness. I'm
so proud. So proud for me little man and all.. For sure.
Don't fool yourself. I'm just saying 'keep it real'. Where we come from ain't much
better.

Beat.

And one day, they'll say we belong and we won't be afraid if they ask me to go 'cause
they're honest and fair and they're great. It's a great place. This place's in our bones
and in me head.

This is somewhere we know. The one we only know... we know ...there is nowhere
else.

Don't fool yourself.

Towards Hermia.

You should help too. It's like giving back. They got us all here as they needed us. They
need us once more.

He sets himself on the sofa ready to sleep. Long pause. He falls asleep.

Hermia wakes up and takes a big cushion from behind the sofa, goes to Maurice, and is about to put the cushion over his head.

Blackout.

Chapter 2.1

Maurice *wakes up from the sofa as if he had a bad dream and goes and sit at the breakfast table. He places the music box, which is now fully repaired, on the breakfast table. **Hermia**, dishevelled and exhausted, enters walking up with the child in her arms, whom she places into the cot. Hermia joins Maurice at the breakfast table.*

Hermia *This's something more horrible than anything we've ever had and it's nothing to do with global warming or the migration crisis.*

Maurice turns away. Hermia looks at the cot where the child is heard playing. Then she looks back at Maurice, who stands up abruptly without finishing his breakfast and gets ready to go to work.

Hermia *It's something more sinister. It's some sort of a cold but more deadly than a cold. It takes your lungs and you feel like drowning.*

Maurice is about to leave then stops without looking at her.

Hermia *Please listen to me.*

Exit Maurice.

Hermia *Are you AGAIN going to work?! Work. I see. You take your job too seriously!*

*Noise of a ringing phone. Noise stops. **Hermia** picks up her phone from the pocket of her trousers and starts talking on the phone (on speakerphone of her mobile; she is not looking at her mobile) while engaging in household chores and attending to her child who is heard playing and babbling in the background. **Darya** is not seen on stage and is on the other end of the phone (voice-over). Crackling noise throughout.*

Hermia

Hello?! Yes..

Darya

Can you hear me?

Hermia

Hello?! Yes..

Darya

Pardon me...Please, can you hear me? I think I'm stuck inside.

Hermia

Hello?! Yes. Stuck what?

Darya

Hello? Hello? There's definitely a smell coming from the rest of the building.

Hermia(*Frustrated*)

A smell. What? Another time?!

Darya

Probably. Sweet ...prosperously sweet you might say.

Nervous laughs

Hermia(*Frustrated*)

What? Another time?!

Darya

Oh Darling. You're so kind. I see your husband every day...

Hermia

Well, my husband works there. Yes, as I was saying.

Darya

Oh Darling. Your husband's so terribly kind.

Hermia(*annoyed*)

Well, because my husband works there. (He shouldn't anymore with all that's going on these days).

Darya

And you used to come and visit.

Hermia(*annoyed*)

Yes, I did. *Beat.* As I was saying.....

Darya

Yes?! But you could come and visit again. You see ...

Hermia

My biggest fear is that...

Darya

I don't mind. I am not scared. It's so lovely outside...

Hermia

I would be all alone in a big ward with no family.

Darya

I am always on my own. I've not seen people, the other ladies for ages.

Hermia

I would be all alone in a big ward with no family/

Darya

They bring me my meals. I've got my own toilet.

Hermia

I could die all alone in a big ward. Only nurses and doctors.

Darya

I've only seen nurses and your husband. But you see I think...

Hermia

I could die all alone in a big ward. Only nurses and doctors.

Darya

I heard them say. We're supposed to stay indoors.

Hermia

I never liked to be indoors.

Darya

Exactly. But and... there's an awful smell coming through the door/ And a strange silence.

Hermia

You've got stay indoors. We've got to stay indoors.

Darya

Maybe you're right. I don't really need to go outside. But ...

Hermia

You've got / a lot of light.

Darya

Actually there's always a light.

Hermia

We ain't got much light/ Ours is a dark place.

Darya

The light tells me... Have you tried to open the windows?

Hermia

Even if we open the windows...

Darya

Everything's closed up tight. But the light can shine so beautifully all day long and I can still see it from the corner of my window.

The child starts to cry. Hermia attends to it without picking it up.

Hermia

(It's still very dark) my son cries a lot.

Darya

Isn't it what children do?

Hermia

(Once opened, I cannot look at the outside world straight in its eyes).

Darya

Here inside the rest is dense with obscurity.

The child cries harder. This time Hermia picks it up. She will rock it up and down until it starts to settle.

Hermia

As I was saying.

Darya

As I was saying. You could come and open. Or your husband could come and open.

Hermia

I'm sorry. What's it that you're saying/

Darya

I'm saying. The light's saying.

Hermia

I could die all alone in a large ward. Only nurses and doctors/

Darya (*Sarcastically*)

Oh Darling. You wouldn't be on your own though, then?

Hermia

I would be. Full of strangers. I wouldn't know no one. Would I? isn't it the same? Have you seen these, what-you-call, the makeshift hospitals? They look like open-air morgues to me. I tell you.

Darya (*Sarcastically*)

You're overdramatizing. We are going to go through this. I'm sure. Besides/ you're young.

Hermia

The worst would be not to see my son anymore. My little prince. Then, my body and others all piled up in makeshift morgues!

Darya (*annoyed*)

This is rather morbid. Don't you find?

Hermia

I can feel it coming. I can feel like a storm. Don't you hear the foxes screaming at night?

Darya (*Even more annoyed*)

They screamed all the same before all this. It's spring.

Hermia

I never used to stay awake till 5 in the morning/ And my stomach's upside-down with worries...

Darya (*Sarcastically*)

I'm so sorry to hear. How can you get through the day? How can you look after your little one?

Hermia

They're at one another. I mean the foxes. And the silence. So weird, I tell you! Like in a horror movie. That's it. It could be the soundtrack of a horror movie.

Darya

I am partial to horror movies.

Pause.

Hermia

I can't stand TV either. It's all about... I mean they talk about numbers. It's like a war bulletin. Every day. Then in the movies. I mean. You see people running around free and caring 'bout nothin'. (*Pause*) People all together. Drinking together. Smoking together. Travelling. They look so happy. (*Pause*) I know this all started few weeks ago. But it seems so long. It's like watching footage from some time past. Long ago. Ancient-like. Documentary-like about the past that's no more. (*Pause*) Now, the streets

are empty. Nothin'. I mean you can actually hear the wind blowing, in the streets. I even saw squirrels on the high street. Messing up empty bins. (are you even listening...)

Darya (*Beyond frustrated*)

Reality's changed for sure.

Silence.

Hermia

It feels so unreal. It won't look the same. Even when it's all over.

Darya (*Frantic*)

So they thought after the war. But then. It all went back to normal.

Hermia

It's getting closer. It'll get personal. It's like ... I mainly worry about me husband.

Darya (*Sarcastically*)

I hardly can't find words to describe it. It feels as if something's dying inside. And I hardly care that it's spring...

Hermia

You just said we'll get through this.

Darya (*Pretending a nervous laugh*)

Silly me. Did I? I was barely a child during the war.

Hermia

Let's look at the positive. You said it. You're the positive one.

Pause

Darya (*Distracted*)

I won't have put it in these exact words.

Hermia (*hesitantly and angrily*)

I thought you did... say it.

Darya

I 'm not saying it. The light is.

Hermia (*hesitantly and angrily*)

We all need people. Positive people like yourself.

Darya

Positive? Of course. Here you go. Something positive (*Clears her throat and starts to sing.*)

Spring enters as it usually does,

Kind and young.

Hermia

What's that you're saying?

Darya

With its bag

Full with sun and hope...

Lights fade as we hear Darya mumbling away. Hermia puts the child back into the cot. It is sound asleep.

Chapter 2.2

Maurice sits on a bench in the park. He wears the fleece jacket over his carer uniform. He looks down and up.

Autumn leaves. Thick and fast everywhere in the park. Brown muddy pulps. Dirty and dark. Shapeless sculptures. Lonely masses on the grass.

Frostbites are on my hands. As my fists clench. Tight. The blood that has dried on my knuckles starts. Flowing again. It is less than a stream. They slowly form bigger puddles. Over the red skin of my hands. And finally drip onto my jeans. And down to the soil.

I stare at the soil at my feet. I sit on a metal rusty bench. I see it all gathering. It looks much less than that. Only few drops. Few red burgundy dots. On dim soil. Made of dust and gravel.

I might look like an amateur boxer. The cut on my lips is still wide open. It runs from one side to the other. Diagonal. Like a cut from...a distracted sway of a sword. The wound runs deep and stings. The blood, from the lips, is in between my teeth, for sure. I cannot see it. But I can taste it. Bittersweet. It is a fresh wound. I try not to bite my lips. It gives me the shivers. When I do it.

Pause.

I wonder how Hermia and I fell so far apart. I do not remember what it felt like to smell her hair.

'Your hair smells of shit and disinfectant' Hermia says. 'Don't touch your son with these hands of yours? God knows where they've been. The old people defecate and vomit all over,' she continues.

I want to say to her, 'You smell of dirty linen that has not been washed for centuries. You're so plump and inaccessible!'

I say nothing.

And I hardly touch my son.

As he was an infant, when Hermia was in a deep sleep, I held my son as a new-born. And I passed my hands over his face. He sniffled up to my neck. I knew his body by heart. He was tiny. He was only few hours old and was lost in this new world. Outside he must have felt as cold as I do now, sitting at this bench with a thin pullover and jeans.

In the maternity ward. The curtains were drawn. He would only sleep on me, not alone in the cot next to Hermia's bed. The nurses would find us in the morning. I was sitting upright, half asleep, holding him tight. We were listening to each other's heartbeats. We were not supposed to do that; they said I could suffocate him in my sleep. I really did not sleep that much sitting on a hard armchair. *Pause*. I checked on his slow, at times imperceptibly thin, breathing, as if he was not breathing at all.

How could I let him die in my arms?

He cannot cuddle up to me anymore. He only cuddles up to Hermia. Not me!

Long pause.

Is my son disliking me as much as she does? is he also revolted by my presence so much?

I used to be a big cuddler as a child. My grandmother used to call me 'cocolato de nana'

I wish I could still ...cuddle to my grandmother,

I remember I used to look up to her. Her voice was the voice in my head. My best friend. She taught me a lot about life.

My mother, instead....Like my wife. They shout. And they yell. And they brawl.

Hermia and I talk over one another. She does not see these wounds of mine. She says they do not exist.

'I look after YOUR child. And you only think about your job. One day you'll leave us here and never come back,' she says.

Now.

'cause things are getting worse and one day they'll ask me to stay.

You see. They need all the workers like me. Young and willing.

He shrugs.

So I'm sitting here sweating only few drops, but blood nonetheless.

I left my child with her in the house today. He's fine with her. My wife. The house is childproof. He is not an infant anymore. Soon he'll be two. He doesn't even notice I am not there.

My son doesn't even call out for me anymore. He only calls for his mum.

I hope he's safe with her. I'm sure he's safe with his mum.

Sarcastically.

As I was safe with mine.

I was lucky, though. I had always my grandmother with me. With us.

Here it's only the two of us.

Pause.

Our families are thousands of miles away, you see.

Pause.

Here it's only the two of us. My wife and I are on our own. I'm working and she is..She doesn't sleep well at night. My wife. Since our son was born.

I think she sleeps better now. I wouldn't know. I do night shifts. Most nights.

He shrugs again.

'This is my doing' I keep telling myself. Is this what I have signed for?

I ask myself all the time and I say 'yes!'. And 'yes!' I say again.

Chapter 2.3

*Same as scene 2.1 (Cont'd from scene 2.2). We hear **Darya** reciting with passion and slightly overacting. Crackling noise throughout. Hermia's child is trying to get Hermia's attention with mumbled words and loud shouts, which are also heard in the background. Hermia does not attend to the child and ignores it.*

Spring enters as it usually does,

Kind and young. With its bag

Full with sun and hope.

This time, the world, as we know it,

Bows out. It isn't an elegant exit.

Humankind stumbles like a vagabond

We trip over the ruins of our

Own humanity. Nature is taking over.

The foxes scream. The birds hiss

The winds boo. They want us out. Out!

Spring enters as it usually does kind and young

With its bag full with sun and hope

Hermia(*Sarcastically*)

Bravo! You're kidding me. Where's you learnt to sing like this?

Darya (*flattered*)

Please. I am not a singer.

Hermia(*Sarcastically*)

(No doubt!) Is that your own words?

Darya (*flattered*)

Yes!? but I am no poet. I write in my spare time.

Hermia(*Sarcastically*)

You must have a lot. Of time. I mean.

Darya

Not really. I am talking to you now, ain't I?

Hermia

(You called me!) I like to keep you company.

Darya

Well I AM on my own.

Hermia(*desperate*)

No you aren't. You got many people... Like me.

Darya

It's very what's-the-word charitable for you to keep me company. Hope it makes you feel better.

Hermia(*desperate*)

You're like family to me. You're a sort of mother to me.

Darya

That's sweet. But I've got enough children, darling. I don't need anymore.

Hermia

I've got a mother too.

Darya

Hope she's alive and well.

Hermia

I hope she is. Too. She lives in another country/ My parents live in another country.

Darya

Of course. I forgot you aren't from around here.

Hermia

Neither are you.

Darya

Am I what?

Awkward silence.

Hermia

Your people were foreigners too. You too! You're a foreigner!

Darya

We all come from all over. All over. Citizens of the world. You can say! My family is scattered all over the globe.

Hermia

Well. We're all blessed with families, aren't we?

Darya

I AM still on my own, my dear. Here. (One day you'll be too!)

Hermia

Well. You've got people here. Like me husband. They're very nice. And they care/

Darya

As of late, they also come and visit less and less often.

Hermia(*annoyingly*)

I'm sure my husband does. Visit and he will. Still.

Darya

He's a very kind man.

Hermia

It's his job. He loves his job.

Darya

He's one of the best. He cares.

Hermia

I wish I could visit. I do care!

Darya

My family can't either. Visit.

Hermia

How can they? They are scattered all over..

Darya

My sons used to visit. Those who live round the corner/

Hermia

They hardly did...visit. Ever.

Darya (*Speaking to herself*)

Maybe nobody does. Care to visit.

Hermia

One day you'll get out.

Darya

I think they locked the doors.

Hermia

You'll be allowed out.

Darya

Why? Why not now? The light is saying I ought to get out. It's Spring and /

Hermia

I am sorry. I can't be of much/

Darya

Help? I'm sure your husband will/

Hermia

Help

Darya

Help. I hope I have. *Beat.* helped. (I listened to you, did I not?)

Both give a nervous laugh. Pause.

Hermia

My husband'll be there any minute now.

Darya

What's is taking him so long? It's been a while.

Hermia

You ain't alone. (*Jokingly*)/ And you have the light.

Darya (*Dead Serious*)

Neither are you.

Hermia

Maybe I am. Alone.

Darya

Oh well. We're all alone one way or the other. We all die alone one way or the other.

Laughs.

Hissing noise. Hermia goes to the child and start shouting words in her own language. Lights fade. The noise of a sharp slap is heard. Noise of loud child's sobs. Lights up. Hermia lies on the sofa.

Chapter 2.4

Same as Chapter 2.2 (cont'd from Chapter 2.2).

Maurice

I stare ahead. It looks white. The sky. As if it could start snowing. There are few mothers with their prams but they are taking refuge away from the park.

I cannot move. I had to leave. I did not want to hurt her as much as she hurts me.

I stare again and again at the ground. My heart slumps. I see out of the corner of my eyes that they are about to close the gates. I should hurry. I still cannot move.

Then, I sneeze. The mobile rings.

My boss on the other end.

I say 'No. I can't. Not anymore. Hermia my wife cannot stay for that long on her with our child. I've got to think about her. For god's sake! What do you say? That I might lose my what...'

'What about my work permit?' I ask.

'You know that you're only here because you've got a job,' he says. I'm not sure he says that. I can't believe he says that.

'You can't really threaten me like this,' I say.

'I am not, did I say you would lose your job? I did not,' he says.

'Think about the people you care for. The elderly lady you care for. She is someone's family. Someone's grandmother,' he adds.

'She isn't not mine!' and I hang up.

Pause.

I might have had enough of this.

I wipe my face with a tissue.

I cross the gate.

I cuddle up to the wind that blows and pushes me along. My face is clean. My hands are warm. Woundless.

I hear the autumn leaves crunching under my shoes.

He exits.

Chapter 2.5

*Living room. **Hermia** is joined by **Maurice**, who looks dishevelled, holding a can of beer in his hands.*

Hermia I am glad you came to your senses.

Pause. Maurice nods.

Hermia They can't expect staff to deal with it. But don't feel guilty about it.

Pause. Maurice nods.

You're, first of all, a father and the head of this family.

Pause. Maurice nods.

I know it's not nice to leave her behind. But she had her life. Some of them had full happy lives.

I'm glad you made your choice. It was the right choice.

The choice to choose us over them. Over her!

Maurice nods.

Besides, she is not on her own.

Maurice nods.

Besides, she said she still can see some light. Beside...

Pause. Maurice shakes his head.

Besides, she ain't your responsibility.

Pause. Maurice shakes his head.

Besides this is not EVEN your country.

Pause. Maurice shakes his head. Hermia's phone rings. Hermia clicks on the phone but does not speak. The child's sobs stop.

Darya Hello. Do you hear me? Hello?!

Darya Here. Yes! I don't hear you. Are you still there?

Hermia...

Darya Well, I think it is this light again.

Maurice tries to get hold of Hermia's phone. Hermia and Maurice get more physical throughout until they start fighting.

Hermia...

Darya She wants me to follow it. She wants me to get out from my familiar cave.

Hermia...

Darya can't YOU see? She can't see. But you know.

Hermia...

Darya I'm stuck inside with very little light of my own.

Darya Outside. There she is. The light.

Hermia...

Darya I am not saying it. The light is.

Hermia...

Darya Here. I'm stuck inside with very little light of my own.

Hermia...

Darya Hello. Do you hear me? Hello?!

Hangs up. Hermia throws the phone into the cot, which is empty.

Hermia You've got a small child! For God's sake. He IS. Your responsibility.

Maurice points to her.

He's not only my responsibility. And I would be ON MY OWN! I can't be in my own.

And your son? What about if I get sick? If he gets sick!

Pause. Maurice stands up and is about to walk away.

Wait, wait a minute. STOP FOR THE LOVE OF...

She stops him from walking away.

I tell you. We all die alone one way or the other. But we ain't dead yet.

The child's sobs continue. Black out.

Chapter 2.6

Darya *appears behind a glassed door, in the middle of the stage. She is seen hanging up a landline phone on to a small corner table behind her. Then, she hits the glassed door in the attempt to open it.*

The light shines so beautifully all day long and I can still see it from the corner of my window. Here inside the rest is dense with obscurity. My walls are possibly of a dark brown. I can't totally make it out. Not totally. It's full of shadows. They are not mine. Many others have visited this room for sure. (*Chuckles*) It smells of ancient sweat. It reminds of my grandmother's closet as my mother and I were cleaning up her things.

Then she had long gone but the smell, sweet and all, was everywhere, in everything. My hands smelled of it for days after the end of the clear-out.

Laughs.

I might smell myself the same. Now. But my smell won't linger on for very long. It'll stay on as long as it's necessary and will just add up to those of others that before me have stayed indoors for days on end and those after me that are still to come.

Laughs. She turns towards the wall looking for an escape elsewhere.

The light can't see. You know... My house is a very small room now. I rest my tea on the carpet, which barely resembles a floor. It is rather dingy. It's hard. Almost like concrete. I know I shouldn't complain. I've got at least a roof over my head.

Laugh.

Look. Wait. The light is posing me a question. 'Can you be a bit clearer?' I say.

Chuckle.

It whispers back. Too bright to ignore it. I totally understand it.

She paces up and down her small space.

It whispers back. It's too bright to ignore it. I totally understand it.

Yes, I would like to follow it. Everywhere. As I want to see everything. Especially now that there's some solitude in the streets. These used to be so crowded. My walking stick would constantly get caught up in between other people's legs. How many times I said I was sorry. They didn't seem to care and if they did, they had a condescending smile painted all over their idiotic faces. Yes, my bright friend. I am happy not to see people at all.

Laughs.

(Looking upwards). 'Please don't ask me so.... I see how beautiful you are with all your might. You're very convincing but I was told to rest and stay indoors. And so I shall. Stop it.'

(Whispers) I'm telling it to stop it. But it doesn't listen.

Chuckles. She hits the glassed door in another attempt to open it.

Don't ask me why I shall stay indoors. I mean. As if I cared how long I still have till the final breath... I would run and embrace the rest of it in this precious moment of silence now that I can walk the streets alone.

She still tries to open her door.

But let me ask you a question. Can you still see the colourful flowers in bloom? Are the daffodils still out there? I remember. They explode with colour in big carpets of yellow. They might have died out already by now. They only bloom for a short while. And so is life.

Chuckle.

Yes, last time I was out it was long ago. Maybe even the park is closed now. You can't smell the beautiful flowers from here. I don't see much either. As you know, my room is right up in the attic. I only see some sky. Or the clouds...

Sad chuckle. She looks through the glassed door.

The only thing I can hear are the voices of my sons. In my head. This is what's stuck in my memory from my long uneventful life. Yes, I can hear them shouting in the garden ...playing football. I watch them from the garden deck. I smoke my pipe and ...Yes pipe. I was a single mum but a sophisticated one. Bohemian you could say. *(Cheekily)* I was so bored then. An ordinary life didn't suit me. I was looking for my light, out of the village, away from the charming cottage that had belonged to one of my late husbands. Solitude didn't suit me either.

Pause.

I was happy, though. But I didn't know I was happy then. I had my boys. Thereon all went downhill. I don't remember how and why. I don't want to. *Sad chuckle.*

(To the light, looking upwards) 'Stop it. You can't persuade me. You're like my first love who made me pregnant with hopes and I did things with him I've never dared doing with any of my husbands.'

These were the days. I am telling you. Young people don't know what's like to be free of inhibitions. They spend too much time locked indoors, even if they don't have. Oh well even when they didn't have to.

Sigh.

I've been known to be weak to temptations...

Laughs.

I know. What?

Pause.

Are you saying nobody is here to stop me? Are you saying they've all left? I must admit. There was some noise of goings and comings the other night from the other floors. And since then, nobody's come to change my diapers or bring me food. And there's an awful smell coming through the door and a strange silence.

Maybe you're right. They all have left. I mean....Oh well. I don't blame them. I don't even know why they bother with us. We're just piles of bones and wrinkles who defecate and eat like parasites.

Nervous chuckle.

Ouch! That was a bit too far. Sorry. I'm known to be a cynical 'bitch'. Yes. Personally I don't use these vulgarities. But my sons used to call me that. They're a bit vulgar. They've got no real education. They use this kind of words. So often.

Pause.

A bitch? They used to say. Too late to change it now. I suppose. (*Nervous laugh*)

Long pause.

It doesn't matter.

Beat.

We're all alone one way or the other.

Beat.

We all die alone one way or the other.

Long pause.

Hello? Hello? There's definitely a smell coming from the rest of the building. Is this what death smells like? Probably. Sweet ...prosperously sweet you might say.

Nervous laugh.

I don't mind. I'll get used to it. As you do. I am not scared. It was expected.

Everybody's running for their lives. I suppose her husband's running too.

Sad sigh.

Am I feeling ok? Well, yes fine. My hands are cringed with pain. But on the plus side, the rest of my body's gone a bit numb. I feel no hunger anymore. But my tea's gone cold for days. I might be a bit cold, myself.

(*Shaky voice, looking upwards*). Don't take pity on me, my bright friend. I've had my bright days. Just stay with me. Be my companion. Stop telling me... I know. I wish I could say it to you. I wish I could say it. I wish I could say....

Pause.

"Ok I'm coming. Wait!"

Maurice appears in front on the door. Darya and Maurice look at each other through the glassed door. Lights fade.

Chapter 3.1

One year later. Late Evening. Hermia and Maurice sit at the breakfast table, facing the audience, one at each side of the table.

Hermia

Well that's right.

You're, first of all, a father and the

You've got a small child! For God's sake.

You just can't put your health at risk. For what? For the few quid they give youah.

They ain't protecting you. You'd put all your family at risk.

I kept telling him. Maurice. My husband.

I already have helped. I was on the frontline. I've helped many people, white, black and the Asians. All sorts. Our countrymen. They're so many of us on the frontline.

He turns towards Hermia. She does not notice.

Don't fool yourself.

Trying to get Hermia's attention.

I said and said. But nothing. He went anyway. He left. He went back to her. He went to the care-home and lived full-time in the care-home for months. There was a global crisis they said so he stayed with her. He looked after her. And not only her. All the others.

'Was it all worth it?'

He smiled back. And I knew it. He looked tired but felt like a hero.

I said, 'You've been just one of the lucky ones.'

He went to take a shower.

Don't fool yourself.

The way I see it is if they criticize my accent, the way I speak, this means to me that there's something wrong with them. They criticize me because they don't accept themselves. You know what I want to say, yeah?

Don't fool yourself!

Maurice sits and puts his head between his legs.

The other day, a few days ago, my husband just picks our son from school. For the first time. My son had started

going to school. Maybe a week or so prior. He looks so much the part.

My husband hasn't noticed. Though. Time's passed by in a flash. Sometimes Maurice still thinks our son is two years old.. Yeah. After coming back he's often confused.

Pause.

One day. You see. Maurice, you see, used to go to the park, next to the seafront, every day with our son. When he was very little. You see the park is just round the corner.

As Maurice comes back from the park. One day. He goes on his own. Now. without our son or me. You see. As Maurice comes back and there he is. Our son. Grown up and all.

A full four-year-old going five.

My husband looks at him and our son has such a large smile. He goes to Maurice as he holds something as if it was something very special.

And he shows it to Maurice. It is only a drawing. Nothing much. But he looks so proud and all. Our son.

So my husband rubs his eyes. He can't even focus. Showing that he cares. I 'pose. But I know he can't. Care. His eyes squint.

He rubs his eyes again and again. With both his hands.

Beat.

There it is. A medal. The drawing of a medal, to be exact. A big fat perfect

rounded golden medal. Coloured and all.
On a wide piece of paper.

He raises his head slightly, looking at the audience.

Most of the carers, my co-workers were doing nothing. And they left the whole thing for me to do.

It's.. it's.. it's.. definitely more work for than... you know.. than.. if you work at a desk, in an office you know.

Especially when you come from an agency, they just push everything to you, and unfortunately you've got to do it because ...I dunno why but I've got to do and...

Some of them just want. The patients. They want the females to take care of them. They don't want to be taken care by male workers. Especially foreign workers.

Long pause.

I've been afraid for myself in this country. Because of my national origin. 'cause I look different and worst of all I sound different. But then and now, they needed me. Why would I refuse my help?

'Papa is a hero'. My little man says with his big brown eyes. 'You go and help all these people'. He continues. 'Even when people were sick. Even when you were sick. You're a proper hero!'

Our son says. And he is dead serious.

But...*Pause.*

So you would expect Maurice to give our son a big hug, right? Instead...He just

He puts his head between his legs.

laughs. A long prolonged loud laugh...a laugh that is no really a laugh. Rather a roar.. a growl...and then and then.. he stops. *Frantic*. He takes the piece of paper from my son's hands. Maurice's own hands are shaking. Really shaking. Like a spiderweb to the wind.

And ..*She swallows hard and sighs.*

I can't even say it. My dear ...husband..Maurice... the father of my son...starts tearing it all away into shreds. The piece of paper. The drawing, you see. The paper is torn into wide confetti. In the end.

'What are you doing that for?' I say.

My son cries and pulls Maurice's arms, scratches his hands...but he can't stop his father.

I can't stop it either. Even if I wanted it.

Maurice laughs again and laughs. Possessed.

His eyes. Spent.

Beat.

I'm sure he doesn't mean any of it.

I've never heard him laugh so loudly! He looks like a stranger to me!

Beat.

Now the two don't talk to each other.

Father and son. Now.

He raises his head and turns towards Hermia facing her.

I sometimes forget what my mother language can sound like in my mouth. Words choke.

'cause when the first time, I saw the Dover cliffs I cried big tears. I wanted to forget where I come from and wanted to say I can talk YOUR tongue too.

He turns away from her. His head between his legs.

Don't fool yourself..

The.. the ...the salary is not right at all.

We are being taken advantage of.

For some of us, it's not even about the money. It's about feeling appreciated. It's about feeling like what we do matters. And there're a lot of health care people staff that actually died, and..

Some have worked fifteen hours a day, you know, maybe with breaks in between, maybe

....

and then you can't like speak the same language. Yeah, you can't just like discuss with people. They can see, that we are not English. The patients... they often feel uncomfortable, with one of us. 'This is an English place,' they say.

She turns towards Maurice, who does not notice, almost shouting.

I know your father was a hero. I want to say to my son. But I am a hero too. I stayed. I was alone as you were a little boy, and nobody came to visit. Not even when you were sick and I was sick. I was scared but I stayed. I was on my own then. I am also a hero. But I don't get any medal for all what I did. *Calmer.*

I don't say any of that. Of course. My son
had cried enough. That day.

We're managed by a group of persons
who just know that they have to fill
these slots, and their responsibility is to
fill the gap...and now nothing has
changed. ... they just don't appreciate
us.

Beat.

Oh, I can't just imagine how, but like
even as I'm talking about this, my heart
is just going like that, you know.

But I didn't do long hours and doing all
this work, and you know they didn't
appreciate it.

And get those kinds of comments.

So for me I feel visible sometimes, but
sometimes I don't feel.

I am visible conveniently.

'You don't belong here,'

They say. Sometimes.

Still....*Beat.*

It's important to care!

My husband was back. He was broken.
But he was back.

And we are back to normal. Well
whatever normal is ...

*Hermia takes the music box from
underneath the sofa and looks at it with
interest.*

With the strikes and the pay gap
and...more strikes and the cost of living
and the wars and the riots....

.

Hermia places the music box on the floor under her feet and raises a foot. She is about to stamp on the music box but Maurice, frantic, tries to stop Hermia from stamping on the music box. She lowers her foot next to the music box. Maurice grabs it from the floor into his hands as if it was a precious possession. He opens it and looks at it with awe. Hermia grabs the music box from Maurice, placing it on the floor. The music box is open and its music becomes more and more audible. She takes Maurice in her arms, and they start dancing.

Chapter 3.2

Maurice and Hermes are still dancing, sometimes like a loving couple, sometimes with wide rushed and violent pushes and pulls. Darya appears on stage, out of character, and addresses the audience while they are dancing.

just for 3 or 4 people to 30 service users.

they just want the female to take care of them. They don't want to be taken care of.

By male workers. By foreign workers

So for me I feel visible sometimes, but sometimes I don't feel.

I am visible conveniently.

You don't belong here,

They say. Sometimes.

Still....

It is important to care!

Maurice and Hermia stop and look at each other exhausted. Maurice gets ready for work and Hermia goes to the music box, looks at it with awe.

More hours to meet needs

Higher Surveillance

More work more humanity in us

Less appreciation

More sceptical

Blame

They try to impose English accent

Not my language

Challenging many stakeholders pretending no stress

More fear

Less money

Hermia looks at Maurice. Exit Maurice.

You need to be nice to everyone. You don't know what they are bustling, or what they
came from, or whatnot, but, personally,
I just think I just had to keep my head up.

*Hermia stands up with the music box in her hands, and looking at the Darya places on
the floor. She hurriedly puts on a coat.*

You know what
More hours to meet needs
Higher Surveillance
More work more humanity in us
Less appreciation
More sceptical
Blame

Hermia closes the music box and exits.

They try to impose English accent
Not my language
Not my place
Still my home
Without fear...

Blackout.

Chapter 4.1

*Four years later. Late Evening. The stage is split into two. Hermia is back in her country,
making herself a cup of black coffee in her parents' kitchen that is very basic and looks
very 1970s. In UK, Maurice is in the kitchen of a carehome preparing tea.*

Hermia

Maurice

Four years later Maurice's still going to
work. You see. Yes, to the same place. To
her. I am sure he is fine. I've never asked.
Still to same place year after year.

You see. My husband four years ago made
the right choice, and our son thought his
dad was a hero. Because we all clapped

and cheered every Thursday. 8pm, was it?
But now they've forgotten about him.
And all the others. Until one day. 13 May
2025.

13 May 2025.

I finally make a cup of tea that the old
folks don't pour all out onto the floor.
The old lady? the one that looked like my
nan? Nah. She's long gone. Yes...Well.
It happens very often 'round here. For
most of them this is the last station. *Beat*.
Now. There's a very old man. Very
distinguished. He used to be in the
army. A general they say.
He sits alone, most of the time. No family
comes and visits him much either. Like
with the old lady. So he sits all by himself
near the large window. In a corner. He
never smiles to me when I serve him tea.
And he is one of those that not only
pours out his tea onto the floor. The
whole cup. Sometimes he smashes it
into pieces. Hot tea and all. *Chuckles*.
He says that my tea tastes like dirty
water. 'You're trying to poison me, aren't
you?' he says.
I often soak the hot tea from the floor
with my thick sponge. I wipe the floor and
I think. I wipe and I look at him. I could
easily put the sponge and tea down his
throat. I think.
He sighs. Of course. I know it's not
personal.
He does not do it with all the other carers
and he even smiles at the young
Philippino lady who takes over after my

shift... Old perv. I don't mind. I rather he doesn't smile at all.

It's more than a dirty look than a smile.

Beat.

I know it isn't personal. That's the main thing.

Beat.

He always says I should go back to where the hell I come from. Almost daily. But I know it isn't personal.

Pause.

So May 13? Then?

Yes. 'Enoch Powell waz right,' he says one day holding his cup straight to my face and then drinks my tea. So I know there's 'thing wrong for sure.

'The River Tiber won't be foaming with blood for much longer' he says and then he even smiles.

I don't know who Powell guy's – he sounds a right moron if you ask me- and what the river blood thing is, it's beyond me.

So, again I shrug. I keep me head down. And then I see.

The old man now gulps down my tea.

Empty. *Puzzled.* There's for sure something wrong. On May 13.

But I move on. For now.

They were all surprised and shocked when they heard Sir Keir on 13 May.

'I am filled with foreboding; like the Roman, I seem to see: The River Tiber foaming with much blood'.

And they all compared Sir Keir's speech to this Enoch's guy back to 1968. Who apparently really didn't like any of us much. But it was 1968 so I think then he was not the only one.

Pause.

But in 21st century. They're all surprised. I wasn't. I don't trust politicians. You see. I don't trust those in my own country either. And all the fairness and tolerance that Maurice always talked about? I really never saw it.

Chuckles.

I thought about Maurice when I heard the news. He would be well upset. He takes everything so personally. I wanted to tell Maurice. 'You should've seen this coming. It isn't personal'.

I didn't say any of it. Of course. I'm back home thousands of miles away from him. From the UK. And maybe I thought. Now Maurice'll also come back for sure. We can all be a family again. For sure. The thing is .. Maurice doesn't miss his country. I don't think he misses me or his son either.

Chuckles.

I think he likes to be a stranger. In a land full of strangers. *Chuckles.*

'The land of strangers' I watch it on TV later that night. I hear it loud and clear. And I can't breathe. As if they're talking about me.

Sir Keir isn't an Etonian but sounds like one, my landlady tells me and she must be right. She's been through the years when the real Etonians run the country.

Beat.

Longer than 5 years. No I'll have to wait for another 5 years. Maybe even 10 or 15?!

Ten years-plus for the right to be here IN-DE-FI-NE—TE-LY... I don't think I can last that long.

Another mate from the home says that I won't have to. They'll send some of us back.

Pause.

I'm telling you, since then, I have a tingling sensation in my right hand and I try not to shake like a leaf. I can't drop the tea on the old man's lap. They'll send me back for sure then!

You're judging me. I know. I left my husband. I took his son away from him. Our son'll never receive a British education. Now for sure. But I'm telling you. Home can be a dark place. It was a dark time. Now that they no longer talk about it. Until the next crisis comes..I 'pose.

And some people still suffer in silence but they suffer. I did and I know I did. I still do.

Sigh.

I have a small job too. Now. You know. I went back to my old job. Not a great job and it pays nothing much. But I can't stay home and do nothing.

Pause.

You see I was a stranger there. And I didn't want to clean toilets and serve the elderlies. I can't do accounting in England. I wasn't qualified. So they said. This is what

happens when you follow your dear husband. 'cause as we just got married.

One day, he just decided. It was time to go to England. And I followed. What else could I do? I was pregnant. I was happy. I thought that was the right choice.

Pause.

Now I moved back with my parents, and they look after our son so I can work, see my friends. I've got my life back.

We don't have much. *Proudly.* You see in our country we are used to live all under one roof.

Beat.

'I don't care about the money. Is this all worth it?' I say to Maurice, when we talk on the phone.

As usual he doesn't reply.

We hardly talk on the phone these days.

His mobile is hardly ever on.

23 May 2025

My mobile vibrates in my back pocket.

Nobody ever calls me. Not even my wife.

Well soon my ex-wife. She hardly ever calls.

Chuckle and then continues.

I can't pick it up. I'm serving tea again.

But I can't wait. As soon as I've got a minute, I go into the kitchen. I get my phone out. My fingers... They're gummy as if they were not my fingers. I swipe and click until I get to it. I put the phone on the side of my left ear. Not too close but too far either. The voicemail. It starts something like Home office... I let it play

away from my ear and my face. Until I don't want to hear no more.

Long pause. Heavy breathing.

I decide to make some more tea. The water in the kettle's still hot enough. I let the teabags plunge deep in the white ceramic pot.

The tingling starts again. I shake a little. Like electric waves, this time, the tingle travels up, wraps all around my right hand and my right arm, all the way up to the shoulder.

Then, a hissing noise in my ears. My knees are about to give away...

As if tons of brick fall on my chest... I catch my breath and...

Beat.

I shake and I miss the cup and pour the tea on my right hand.

Tea like a hot lava squirms all over my hand and the kitchen top.

I want to scream. I shouldn't scream.

If I scream, they'll send me back.

I tell myself. If I scream, they'll know I don't belong here.

If I scream, they'll hear my voice.

If I scream, they'll never understand.

If I scream, they'll see me for what I am.

A wounded animal. And I'm not just an animal.

If I scream...

I don't scream.

I look at my hand. It's so red and hot. I try to think...I can't even think..

Long pause.

'This isn't a land for strangers! 'this is
what the voice on the phone said.

He crouches onto the floor.

She sighs.

I tell you something. You should never be
the last one to leave a party especially if
you haven't been invited. I tell you
something. Maybe they're right. We should
all stay put. Live where you're born no
matter what. Bad luck if where you're born
it's all poor and even worse it all around you
bombs falls at random and your house goes
down into dust and gravel. *Chuckles.*

If we all did stay put, I mean, there'll be no
strangers, right? And to be fair, how would
you like it if strangers turned up to your
house, uninvited? *Beat.* You see.

I'm telling you something!

She puts down the coffee and exits.

*He stands up and looks at his hand. He
takes his uniform off and tries to nurse his
hand with it. He is clearly in pain.*

I tell you something. When I decided to
come to this country I just needed to get
out. Don't get me wrong. I love me
country. It's got a bright sky most days
and the beach's still pristine and the
waves come in like crystals made of the
water.

Here the waters are dark and
impenetrable.

Then the food. Don't get me started there!
The food tastes like nothing. Spiritless. I
can't get it right even if I cook it myself.

It's the water I say. Me tastebuds'll never get adjusted to it. I tell you.

Frantic. He is still clearly in pain.

I wouldn't have left for nothing in the world but...I tell you something. Most don't leave if they don't have to. They must. I had to. You don't know how poor it is poor. I only wanted a better future... ...what's the point in telling you this? There's so many of us! We look all alike to you!

He shows his hand to the audience. Then he tries to compose himself.

I just hope one day I can see the light. The light streams. I can touch the light streams. I can smell the light streams. I can....

Beat.

I tell you something.

By the end he will be standing erect and straight. Although still in pain he will retain some of the pride he had at the beginning of the scene.

This is where I don't belong. Sometimes. And sometimes I belong and it is the one place I only know... we know ...there is nowhere else. For now.

I tell you something.

Don't fool yourself.

The end

The end