

THE WAITING ROOM

(A stage play)

By

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Students of The Queen Katherine School, Kendal

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**Created using the
Decamot Writing
Process**

CHARACTERS

MAX O'CONNOR: A single child with two demanding, high-achieving, professional parents.

DAMIEN WOODS: A lad gifted both athletically and artistically, but from a family of petty criminals.

INSPECTOR GRAY: An experienced police officer who takes his job very seriously.

DS KERRY SHELTON: A young ambitious policewoman keen to succeed and to impress her superiors.

HEIDI CARADUS: A strong independent teenager with a strong moral sense and fiercely protective of her family.

ALEX CARADUS: A fun loving teen, twin to Heidi, who wants nothing more than a quiet life and to be accepted.

MR O'CONNOR: Max's father, a successful lawyer who has achieved his position largely by bullying those around him.

MRS O'CONNOR: Max's mother, a successful lawyer who has not let having a child slow down her career.

SAMANTHA GEORGE: A popular schoolgirl who is gifted academically.

LIAM: A cheeky Jack-the-Lad character who can get away with murder. Popular with students and teachers alike.

JUNIOR DOCTOR: Harassed newly qualified doctor.

MRS GEORGE: Supportive parent of Samantha.

DUTY SERGEANT: Essential functionary in the police station.

UNIFORMED POLICE OFFICER: Essential functionary in the police station.

2 PARAMEDICS: Essential functionaries at the opening crime scene.

2 HOSPITAL PORTERS: Essential functionaries at the hospital.

SETTING

The majority of the action takes place in an imagined version of Kendal's police station, conveniently relocated to the other side of Kendal to be close to Westmorland General Hospital, near Oxenholme, for dramatic license.

Looking at the stage from the point of view of the audience, there is a Front Desk on the front left side of the stage, a set of chairs forming the Waiting Room along the front of the stage, and an area at the back of the stage that serves as the Holding Cell of the police station. Just beyond the Front Desk is the main entrance to the police station. The Holding Cell has sufficient space for an actor to walk up and down across the back of the stage, plus a low bunk on which to either sit or lie. In the centre of the stage is the Interview Room, constructed so that the audience can see just two partial walls, one of which has a door through which the actors can enter and exit the Interview Room.

There are two other settings in the play: The opening scene takes place in an abandoned supermarket somewhere on the A6 just north of Kendal; the opening scene of the second half of the play takes place in a single occupancy hospital room in Westmorland General Hospital, with Kendal's police station located temporarily on the other side of Burton Road.

INT. ABANDONED SUPERMARKET. EVENING

The curtain raises on a stage dimly lit by several lights at the front and back edges of the stage.

We are in an abandoned supermarket. There are random discarded items lying around: Several shopping trolleys lying on their sides, piles of empty and discarded cardboard boxes, a pile of rubbish bags, lots of individual items of detritus, for example discarded crisp packets, crumpled drink cans, screwed up cigarette boxes, etc.

There are also several rows of shelves, empty of contents. Some of these have been pushed over. And there are several sturdy plastic crates.

There is a door at the far end of the stage, off to the right, which appears to be boarded up from the outside. There are windows high on the walls on each side of the stage. There are several crates piled on top of each other under one of the windows on the left side. What little light there is seems to be coming from street lights outside those windows. It's clearly night outside.

We see the shadow of a FIGURE appear at one of the windows. The figure appears to be holding something, a hammer perhaps, and knocks it firmly on the frame of the window several times. Each time the frame moves a little. On the fourth, hardest strike, the window flies open.

VOICE O.S.
(whispering loudly)

Quickly!

The figure on the outside hoists itself through the window, lets itself down onto the piled crates and into the abandoned supermarket, and stands below the now opened window. The figure is dressed in dark jeans and a dark hoodie, with hood covering head. Average height, average build; could be a young adult, could be an older child; could be male, could be female.

HOODIE 1
(different voice from outside, also
whispering)
OK, chuck 'em through.

A flat object, about 2 foot long comes sailing through the window, is caught easily, and placed on the floor.

HOODIE 1

'K

A second similar object comes sailing through the window, also caught and placed on the floor next to the first.

HOODIE 1

'K

A third object comes sailing through the window, it looks like a bag tied at the end. Also caught. Also placed on the floor.

Now a second figure appears at the window. This one also climbs in, followed by a third. Like the first figure, these two new figures are wearing dark jeans, dark hoodies, hoods covering heads. By the ease with which the figures have got in and move around, it's obvious that they've been before.

HOODIE 2 goes over to the objects on the floor and flips one over with a foot. We now see it's a skateboard. Hoodie 2 mounts it and starts to glide round the supermarket, expertly weaving between shelves, rubbish and crates. HOODIE 3 likewise flips over the other flat object, a second skateboard, and joins Hoodie 2 gliding round the room. Meanwhile, Hoodie 1 picks up the remaining object, the bag, and walks into the middle of the stage and starts to look around the room like an estate agent appraising property. With back turned to audience, the figure removes the hood to get a better look at the walls. As the figure turns, rather than a face, we see a Guy Fawkes mask, the style of which has recently been made popular with the pseudo-anarchist marches in London and other European cities (i.e. white face, forced smile with high cheek bones, and pencil-thin Van Dyke-style beard).

We notice that the other two figures have also removed their hoods now, and as they glide around, we see that they too are wearing Guy Fawkes masks.

Hoodie 1, having found a satisfactory piece of wall, opens the plastic bag, removes several spray cans, and starts to use them on the wall. It's too dark for us to see what's being graffitied, but we're distracted by the skateboarders. Having skated around until now, they appear to be using one of the toppled shelves to create a ramp. Sure enough, Hoodie 2 remounts the board, gets a good run up, and expertly skates up and over the ramp, landing easily. Hoodie 2 and

Hoodie 3 fist bump. Hoodie 3 takes to the other board and replicates Hoodie 2's jump. Another fist bump.

They quickly set up a higher ramp. Hoodie 2 makes a good jump. They fist bump. Hoodie 3 attempts the same jump, but loses control of the board, leaps off and ends up falling into the pile of rubbish bags.

Hoodie 1 stops graffititiing and looks round alarmed.

HOODIE 1
What was that?

HOODIE 2
What?

HOODIE 1
That groan. From the bags.

HOODIE 3
Er, me falling into the bags duffus!

HOODIE 1
Did you groan?

HOODIE 3
Well no but . . .

HOODIE 1
(interrupting)
I heard a groan.

Hoodie 3 starts scrabbling around in the bags.

HOODIE 3
See? Just bags.

Hoodie 3 flings a few bags behind him.

HOODIE 3
Bags, bags, b . . .

(suddenly sounding panicked)
Oh my God!

HOODIE 2
What is it?

Before Hoodie 2 can answer, we hear a car door SLAM shut outside. Hoodie 2 looks up to see a blue flashing light at the rear of the shop coming through the glass in the door.

INSPECTOR GRAY O.S.
(calling loudly from outside)
Is anyone in there?

HOODIE 1
Shit! Cops.

Hoodie 1 bundles the cans back into the bag and hurries over to the window that they had come in through and jumps up onto the top crate. Hoodie 2 hurries over to the window too, clutching one of the skateboards. Hoodie 3 hasn't moved.

HOODIE 1
(urgent hissed whisper)
Move it you noob!

Hoodie 3 struggles to stand up among the rubbish bags, then dashes to the window empty handed, looks at Hoodie 2's board and looks back towards the pile of rubbish bags. We see that the second board is nestled under them. Hoodie 2 looks about to move back to get it.

HOODIE 1
Leave it!

All three figures clamber back through the window. We then see a hand stretch up and push the window back into place.

INSPECTOR GRAY O.S.
(calling more loudly)
Is anyone in there?

We now hear the sound of a PAD LOCK AND CHAIN being removed from the outside. We see the shadow of a man on far side of the glass door at the rear of the abandoned shop. We hear the padlock and chain being tossed aside and the same voice calling from off set.

INSPECTOR GRAY O.S.
(loudly)
Hello? This is Inspector Gray. Is anyone in there?

The door finally sweeps open and INSPECTOR GRAY, a tall policeman in his late 40s dressed in a long overcoat, walks

into the abandoned supermarket. He's holding a torch which he switches on.

Without moving far from the doorway, he plays the beam around the room. He illuminates the various shelves, trolleys, rubbish bags and crates. He then runs the beam across the pile of rubbish bags into which the skateboarder had landed a few minutes before. We can see a pair of legs sticking out, the rest of the body is obscured by the bags.

INSPECTOR GRAY
(under his breath)

Oh no!

Inspector Gray hurries over to the body under the bags. He places the torch on the floor and switches it off. As he does so, the stage lighting is turned up, the room is now brightly lit. He bends down over the body and clears the bags over its head. The body groans.

INSPECTOR GRAY
It's alright lad, you're going to be OK.
Help's already on its way.

The Inspector leans over the lad as he tries to say something. TWO PARAMEDICS run in through the open doorway.

INSPECTOR GRAY
Over here.

The inspector waves; they hurry over.

INSPECTOR GRAY
Young, mid teens. Says his name is Alex
Caradus.

The paramedics get to work on the stricken body. They will continue to work and ultimately wheel the body out of the room while Inspector Gray completes his inspection of the building.

As the paramedics work, Gray walks round the room sifting through the various items. He walks over to the crates piled under the window and studies the window frame. Finally he stands in front of the freshly painted graffiti. He touches it with a finger, then takes a handkerchief out of his pocket and wipes his fingers. He takes a few steps backwards and reads the graffiti:

INSPECTOR GRAY

"Death comes to those who wait."

He takes a police radio out of his coat pocket. He presses a button and talks into it.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Inspector Gray to station. At SuperCuts on Shap Road responding to tip-off. Can confirm: assault victim, multiple head injuries. Paramedics attending. Odd graffiti on wall, freshly painted. It's now one for the crime scene boys.

Inspector Gray picks up his torch and switches it back on. As he does so, the stage lights are dimmed again. He walks back to the door and reaches for the handle.

His radio CRACKLES into life. DETECTIVE SERGEANT KERRY SHELTON's voice comes on the air.

DS SHELTON O.S.

(more loudly than strictly necessary)

Not so fast, Inspector.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Kerry? What is it? You know I've got a home to go to, not to mention a surprise 50th birthday party to attend that Rachel's bound to be arranging for me.

DS SHELTON O.S.

Uniform have just arrested a suspect near the castle.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Wow that was quick.

DS SHELTON O.S.

Fancy giving him the once over?

INSPECTOR GRAY

Can't someone else do that?

DS SHELTON O.S.

It's one Damien Woods.

INSPECTOR GRAY

What, Jamie Woods kid brother?

DS SHELTON O.S.

The same. Thought that might get your attention.

INSPECTOR GRAY

(reluctantly)

Alright, thanks Kerry. I'm on my way in.

He ends the call. He walks back to the door and walks out. He closes the door behind him.

Stagehands come on to quickly reset the stage. They construct a very sparse setting that can double as both the reception area/waiting room and an interview room of a police station with minimal changes as the action switches between the two. When the interviews are carried out in the centre of the stage, it will be possible to see other characters either in the waiting room or in a police holding cell.

Around the reception area/waiting room of the police station are grey chairs with ugly metal frames and sickly patterned upholstery that matches the wallpaper.

The walls are crowded with posters of cold faces staring down at the occupants of the waiting room. Several people are sitting around the room in two small groups: a MOTHER and a DAUGHTER sitting together, and TWO PARENTS with their SON sitting together. There are several empty chairs around too.

There is a reception desk near the door. The DUTY SERGEANT is entering details on a computer keyboard. BOB, a stern looking uniformed police officer, is holding the shoulders of DAMIEN WOODS, a big lad just passed 18. He is wearing a scruffy, threadbare school uniform. The shirt is untucked, his tie at half-mast, and his shoes are scuffed. His hooded jacket is several sizes too small. Notably, his hands are cuffed together in front of him.

The DUTY SERGEANT places a shallow plastic tray on the desk.

DUTY SERGEANT
(gruffly)

Tie!

Damien removes his tie and hands it to the Duty Sergeant, who places it in the plastic tray.

DUTY SERGEANT

Belt!

Damien removes his belt and hands it to the Duty Sergeant, who places it in the plastic tray alongside the tie.

DUTY SERGEANT

Laces!

Damien bends down and removes the laces from his shoes. It is an awkward manoeuvre with his hands cuffed. After some effort, he stands up and places them in the plastic tray alongside his belt and tie.

The DUTY SERGEANT types again at the computer keyboard. He then places a piece of paper and a pen on the desk.

DUTY SERGEANT

Sign here to acknowledge your personal effects.

Damien takes the offered pen in his right hand and scrawls something illegible on the paper.

DUTY SEARGEANT

Take him to the Holding Cell Bob.

The stern looking policeman nods.

BOB

(to the Duty Sergeant)

Right you are, sir.

(to Damien)

This way lad.

He leads Damien round to the Holding Cell which consists of a chair and small area to walk around in on the far side of the stage. He will remain in this area while the various interviews are conducted in the interview room area in centre stage. In between interviews, he will be pacing up and down or looking bored. During the interviews, he will appear to be listening in.

Just as Damien is being led away, Inspector Gray walks into the Police Station. He is still dressed in his long overcoat and looks like he's in a hurry. He doesn't stop at the Front Desk, he just waves at the Duty Sergeant. He goes straight into the Interview Room.

DETECTIVE SERGEANT SHELTON, a police officer in her mid-twenties, is already in the Interview Room. She is a plain clothed officer smartly dressed in a sharp trouser suit and practical Doctor Martens shoes. She has dark hair cut short but stylish, and could pass as an ambitious junior executive.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Hi Kerry.

DS SHELTON

Sir.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Was that the Woods lad being signed in just now?

DS SHELTON

Yup. Looks just like his brother doesn't he?

INSPECTOR GRAY

Very much so.

DS SHELTON

OD'ed, didn't he? The older brother?

INSPECTOR GRAY

Suspected overdose. The Coroner's report stated that the tox results were inconclusive. Let's get him in here straight away and we can get this thing over with quickly. Then I can get off to my "surprise" birthday party.

DS SHELTON

You might want to hold fire on that.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Why so?

DS SHELTON

We've got two other kids in here you might want to talk to first: A girl, grade A student, top of her class, possession of cocaine.

INSPECTOR GRAY

It happens.

DS SHELTON

And a boy. 'nother grade A student, bit of a loner but a high achiever. Caught breaking into a newsagent. Claims he was coerced.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Mmmm. So what's the connection?

DS SHELTON

Same school as Woods. Both of them. And Bob just told me that we've had some complaints about kids being bullied recently, mainly from the . . . ?

(Shelton pauses to let Gray finish the sentence)

INSPECTOR GRAY

. . . same school as Woods?

DS SHELTON

You got it.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Where was Woods picked up?

DS SHELTON

Near the castle, on a bench.

INSPECTOR GRAY

What was he doing?

DS SHELTON

Just sitting there apparently.

INSPECTOR GRAY

So he was brought here to be questioned. But why's he being treated like a criminal?

DS SHELTON

That was my idea. He's over 18, so it doesn't break protocol. Thought it would give him something to think about for half an hour or so. Besides, I'm sure he's heard tales from his various family members about cells. Thought he might like to have a little taster for himself.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Well I think it's a little over the top, don't you?

DS SHELTON

You're getting soft in your old age, sir!

INSPECTOR GRAY

Well at least it keeps him away from the other two I s'pose. I take it that's them in the Waiting Room? I couldn't help noticing two anxious looking family groupings out there.

DS SHELTON

That's them.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Well, let's get the first one in then.

They both stand up. DS Shelton leaves the Interview Room and heads towards the Front Desk. Meanwhile, Inspector Gray removes his overcoat, hangs it on a hook on the wall, then sits back down again and starts to glance over the notes that Shelton has prepared for him.

DS Shelton, enters the Waiting Room with a clipboard held close to her chest. She stands rigidly by the door. She glances down at the clipboard.

DS SHELTON

Samantha George?

Kerry's eyes scan the people sitting in the Waiting Room. SAMANTHA GEORGE, a girl of around 16, stands up and walks slowly over to her with her MOTHER following. She looks confident enough, but her eyes look fearful.

DS SHELTON

If you would just like to follow me Miss George. Inspector Gray will see you now.

Kerry leads Samantha and her mother to the Interview Room.

DS Shelton shows Samantha and her mother into the Interview Room.

Samantha walks slowly over to a battered chair, whose pattern resembles the nauseating shade of the seats in the Waiting Room. She sits down and waits, trembling. Her mother sits down beside her.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Good Evening. My name is Inspector Gray. Detective Sergeant Shelton you've just met.

MRS GEORGE

You're treating my daughter like a common criminal. It's that boyfriend of hers you should be talking to.

SAMANTHA

(hissing between clenched teeth)

Mum, shhh.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Mrs George, we're here to interview your daughter. As she is a minor, by law her parent, guardian, or a social worker must be present. Do you understand?

MRS GEORGE

I do. I just want to say that this whole thing is ridic . . .

INSPECTOR GRAY

(cutting across Mrs George)

And the law requires that two police officers are also present.

MRS GEORGE

But I just . . .

INSPECTOR GRAY

(again cutting across Mrs George)

No but Mrs George. This is your daughter's interview, not yours. You do understand that?

MRS GEORGE

(meekly)

Yes.

INSPECTOR GRAY

We may need to interview you at another time as a part of this enquiry.

Inspector Gray looks down at the notes on DS Shelton's clipboard. He looks up at Samantha.

INSPECTOR GRAY

So Samantha?

SAMANTHA

Yes, sir?

INSPECTOR GRAY

I am here to question you about the happenings of earlier this evening.

SAMANTHA

Yes sir.

Inspector Gray calmly leans forward. His gaze locks with Samantha's.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Tell me, in your own words: What happened to result in you being here tonight?

SAMANTHA

OK.

Samantha takes a deep breath.

SAMANTHA

I was at school and I got a text from my boyfriend Liam. He wanted to meet up. He was at home as he had no lessons in the afternoon. I replied saying "yes", and he told me to meet him at his. So, when I began to walk home, instead of going straight along the road to my house, I began to take the turning towards Liam's.

INSPECTOR GRAY

So you went to Liam's house?

SAMANTHA

Actually, no. Liam was already waiting for me on the turn off to his house. I wondered why he was waiting there, not inside, and why he didn't ask me in. But we hadn't met up in a few days so I was just happy to see him, and I didn't think anything of it. We started chatting, but he seemed to be in a hurry and he looked a bit worried.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Worried?

SAMANTHA

Yes, sort of edgy. Like something was on his mind. I asked him what was wrong and he told me that he had to deliver a parcel to a friend but he was super busy and didn't have the time to do it. I suggested that he could take it on a different day, but he said that it was urgent and he needed it delivered by tonight. He then asked me whether I could take it. I agreed as I wanted to help him out.

INSPECTOR GRAY

You mean you agreed to deliver the parcel?

SAMANTHA

Yes.

MRS GEORGE

How could you be so stupid?

DS SHELTON

Mrs George, please don't interrupt the Inspector.

INSPECTOR GRAY

How did you know where to take it?

SAMANTHA

He wrote down the address of his friend on a scrap of paper.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Do you still have that scrap of paper?

SAMANTHA

No. No I don't.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Do you remember the address?

SAMANTHA

Yes, it was 34 Maydown Street.

DS Shelton writes down the address on the clipboard.

DS SHELTON

So what happened next?

SAMANTHA

He handed me a small package. It was about the size of my outstretched hand and quite thin. I asked him what was inside it, but he only told me that I mustn't under any circumstances lose it or open it. So, I put the package up my sleeve so I knew I couldn't drop it. I said "bye" to Liam, then went home.

INSPECTOR GRAY

So you went straight home before delivering the package?

SAMANTHA

Yes. I was going to take it after tea.

INSPECTOR GRAY

And you didn't go anywhere near 34
Maydown Street either then or since?

SAMANTHA

No.

INSPECTOR GRAY

OK, go on.

SAMANTHA

It was a bit later on when I was doing
my homework that my mum called me
downstairs. There was a police constable
sitting in my living room and he had
asked to see me. I wondered why on earth
he was here. He asked me questions about
Liam, but I didn't understand why. He
explained that it was because some of
his mates had been suspected of illegal
activity, but I didn't know anything
about it.

MRS GEORGE

I never did like that boy.

DS SHELTON

Any more outbursts like that, Mrs
George, and we'll have to suspend the
interview and arrange for a social
worker to be present instead of you.

INSPECTOR GRAY

OK, let's just calm down. Now Samantha,
tell me: Before the police constable
questioned you, you had no idea that
Liam was suspected of any criminal
activity?

SAMANTHA

That's right. The police officer asked
me so many questions, none of which I
knew the answers to. He kept on blaming
Liam of doing horrible things and asking
me things that I didn't know. He just
kept asking and asking and asking . . .

Samantha starts to SOB quietly.

INSPECTOR GRAY

(gently)

What happened next?

SAMANTHA

Well I couldn't take it anymore, I just sort of . . .

(she pauses briefly)

. . . lost it. I got angry and upset. Mum rushed through to see what was happening. I rushed to her and hugged her tight, and the policeman got up to leave. But then the package dropped out of my sleeve onto the carpet.

INSPECTOR GRAY

The package Liam gave you?

SAMANTHA

Yes. It was like in a film when time just kind of slows down. We all stared at the parcel in disbelief as it flew across the room and landed at the policeman's feet. My heart was beating so fast I thought I was going to drop dead.

Inspector Gray looks down at his notes.

INSPECTOR GRAY

The package containing a white powder that the police officer subsequently identified as cocaine, a Class A drug?

MRS GEORGE

(muttering)

The shame of it.

DS Shelton glares at Mrs George, but says nothing.

SAMANTHA

I was arrested and sent here immediately. I can't believe Liam gave me that parcel. He knew what was in it, and he gave it to me anyway. I thought he was kind. But now I know he's just a heartless drugs lord.

Samantha sobs again. Mrs George hands her a tissue. Samantha blows her nose. The inspector looks up from his notes. He studies Samantha with an intense gaze.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Is that everything?

SAMANTHA

Yes. Yes it is.

DS SHELTON

It's lucky for you that you didn't, go near 34 Maydown Street, otherwise you would have been looking at a dealing charge. Possession is bad enough, but dealing is so much worse.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Thank you Samantha. DS Shelton will take you back to the reception area now. We have some other people that we need to talk to. We may well need to talk to you later. Please remain in the Waiting Room for the time being.

DS Shelton shows Samantha and her mother out of the room. Inspector Gray remains seated looking over DS Shelton's notes.

DS Shelton walks over to the Front Desk. She confers with the Duty Sergeant. He points towards a family grouping of two adults and a young lad.

DS SHELTON

Max O'Connor?

MAX O'CONNOR, a sheepish and timid looking boy in his mid-teens, stands up. He looks like a frightened child. He pushes his glasses as far up as his nose would let him.

MR O'CONNOR, Max's father, stands up and pushes past his son. He marches over to DS Shelton.

MR O'CONNOR

(in a commanding voice)

Mr O'Connor, Max's dad.

He holds out his hand for shaking. DS Shelton ignores it.

DS SHELTON
It's Max O'Connor I want. That Max?

DS Shelton nods towards the hesitant figure of Max.

MR O'CONNOR
(gruffly)
Yes.

(to Max)
Get a move on, Max. The sooner we get
this started, the sooner we can be out
of here. I've lots left to do this
evening.

Max trundles over to DS Shelton. MRS O' CONNOR, a smartly
dressed woman in her early 40s, hurries over to join them.
She puts a protective hand onto her son's shoulder.

MRS O'CONNOR
Frightened of his own shadow, this one.

DS SHELTON
Right, let's get a move on.

DS Shelton takes Max and both his parents through to the
Interview Room. Max sits down in front of Inspector Gray.
Max's eyes flick in every direction like a cobra's tongue.
He hunches his shoulders up to his ears as if trying to hide
himself in the collar of his jacket. His hands are
trembling. He clasps them together to conceal the shaking.
He blinks hard to erase the tears in his eyes.

Mr O' Connor sits down next to Max. Mrs O'Connor stands
awkwardly behind them.

INSPECTOR GRAY
Kerry, be a love and get an extra chair
for Mrs O' Connor would you?

DS SHELTON
(stiffly)
Of course, *Inspector*.

DS Shelton leaves the room.

MR O'CONNOR

I'm Mr O'Connor, Max's dad. So what's all this nonsense about? I understand you think my boy's involved in some petty theft or other.

INSPECTOR GRAY

That's exactly what we're here to discuss, Mr O'Connor. And I can assure you, I'll be just as happy to get this concluded as quickly as we can as well. But, we do of course have procedures to follow.

MR O'CONNOR

(sighing)

Yes, I imagine you do.

DS Shelton returns with a spare chair for Mrs O'Connor. She closes the door and sits back down next to the Inspector.

INSPECTOR GRAY

I am just going to ask you a series of questions, then you will have the chance to tell the story from your perspective. OK?

MAX

(sounding nervous)

OK.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Where were you last night at approximately 9.30 pm?

MR O'CONNOR

I think we all know the answer to that, don't we? Or we wouldn't all be sitting here.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Please let your son answer, Mr O'Connor.

Mr O'Connor sits back in his chair and folds his arms.

INSPECTOR GRAY

So Max, where were you last night at approximately 9.30 pm?

MAX

Well, I was . . .

INSPECTOR GRAY

Yes?

MAX

I was walking to meet my mates.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Had you arranged to meet them?

MAX

Yeah, me and my best mate, we met up on the retail park near Lowd Road. He was with some other guys though, and they weren't at all pleased to see me. They think me mate's cool but not me. I mostly just hang around with them because my mate likes them, and doesn't want to hang out alone.

INSPECTOR GRAY

So the others are not friends of yours?

MAX

No.

DS Shelton makes a note.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Go on.

MAX

Whilst they were chatting, one of the older guys said that we were in their crew now. I felt good because, I thought that they had finally accepted me into the group. But when I brought it up, they all laughed, even my mate. And they said I was a little squirt and that I didn't deserve to be with them.

INSPECTOR GRAY

So what happened next?

MAX

Well, I felt horrid. It was like even my best mate had turned against me. I began to walk away, but one of the guys ran after me. He pointed to a small newsagents shop and told me that if I robbed it, they'd leave me alone. He said to go in through the stock room at the back and grab a load of cash from the register.

Max sniffs and wipes his nose on the bandage on his arm.

MAX cont'd

But I just couldn't do it. I was just about to argue when the leader from the group came over to me, grabbed me by the collar, and hissed in my ear: "Rob that newsagent, I'll give you 100 quid, and you're in the crew. Don't rob it, and . . . ". He made a slicing motion across his neck with his finger, like this.

Max makes a slicing motion across his neck with his finger.

INSPECTOR GRAY

What did you do?

MAX

I was terrified. Thought my heart would stop. I wanted to say "no", but I knew that if I didn't do it, I would lose the only mate I had. Even if I walked away, I knew they'd come after me.

INSPECTOR GRAY

So you agreed to break in?

Max looks down at the floor.

MAX

(almost inaudibly)

Yes.

INSPECTOR GRAY

And how did that go down?

MAX

The newsagent sells booze and some food and stuff, as well as papers. It closes at 10:30 on Friday nights. The boys said they'd been watching the old guy who runs it. They said the pattern's the same each Friday: he works on his own in the evening, and never locks the back door with the bolt just a flimsy Yale lock. So it's easy to break in and there's no alarm. They've seen him going to deposit the takings at the bank on Saturday mornings, which means it's easy pickings on a Friday night.

INSPECTOR GRAY

So how did you plan to get in without being seen?

MAX

They gave me a leg up over the tall brick wall that faced the back of the newsagent. I tumbled over onto the concrete on the other side. The only thing was, I didn't know how I was going to get back up and over. One of them said they'd find a rope or something so I could climb back up. But then they laughed and ran off.

INSPECTOR GRAY

What happened next?

MAX

I think they must have been playing a prank on me. I was now stuck in the yard behind the newsagent with a tall wall all round me and only one way out: Through the shop.

DS SHELTON

(sarcastically)

So you felt you just had to break in!

MAX

It was as actually as easy as if I was walking into my own home. The lock gave way with the smallest of pressure. I carefully weaved through the boxes and packaging in the stock room, until I made it into the shop floor. All the lights had been switched off, but I could still see where I was going. I crept over to the till. The silly old fool had left the key in the lock. I know I should have just gone straight through the shop and out, but I thought about the gang outside. If they were waiting for me, what would they do if I came out of the shop empty handed?

(Max's voice begins to crack)

I turned the key and opened the till, revealing piles of notes. Easy. But I didn't take it.

INSPECTOR GRAY

What do you mean? You either had the money or you didn't.

MAX

The old man must have forgotten something. He'd come back to the shop. I didn't hear him. I turned round, suddenly there he was. He saw me immediately and started shouting frantically. I knew it was too late.

INSPECTOR GRAY

So you didn't try to escape?

MAX

No, I didn't.

DS Shelton picks up a police notepad.

DS SHELTON

(reading from the notepad)

So you didn't: "Shove the old guy to the ground and make a run for the door, and only stop when you noticed that several passers-by had come into the shop to see what the commotion was?"

Shelton put the notepad back on the table.

MAX

No no no. That wasn't me. I might have moved quickly. He might have slipped. But I didn't want to hurt him.

(Max starts to cry)

It wasn't my fault! They made me do it! They would never have left me alone if I hadn't gone in. I would never have done this if they'd not been there. I, I, I . . .

INSPECTOR GRAY

(interrupting sharply)

But it was you, and only you in Martin's Newsagent earlier tonight. The passers-by saw no other youths around.

MAX

Yes, I know but, I wouldn't've been there at all if they hadn't forced me to, and chucked me over the wall. And . . . I was trying to protect myself.

MR O'CONNOR

You stupid boy.

Mr O'Connor whacks Max on the back of the head with the palm of his hand.

INSPECTOR GRAY

There's no need for that, Mr O'Connor.

(to Max and his parents)

That's all we need to hear for the moment. We'll need to take statements from the other witnesses. You will have to remain in the Police Station for the time being. At the moment we don't have enough information to decide with what to charge you, Max. You could be looking at an assault charge.

INSPECTOR GRAY cont'd
(to DS Shelton)
Can you show the O'Connors back to the
Waiting Room, and then bring young Woods
round?

FRONT DESK

The main door to the Police Station opens and HEIDI CARADUS,
a tall girl of around 14 or 15, walks in. She strides
confidently up to the Front Desk.

DS Shelton walks up to the Front Desk too as Heidi is
talking to the Duty Sergeant. She's here to arrange for
Damien to be brought from the Holding Cell, but doesn't
interrupt the conversation.

DUTY SERGEANT
(to Heidi)
How can I help you, Miss?

HEIDI
I want to report a missing person.

DUTY SERGEANT
Who is it that's missing?

HEIDI
It's my brother Alex.

DUTY SERGEANT
And how long's he been missing?

HEIDI
(gabbling a little)
Well he's been out late a lot recently.
Comes home from school, then goes out
again, then doesn't come back 'til
really late. But today, he didn't come
back from school at all. And it's got
really late now, and he's never been
this late before. And . . .

DUTY SERGEANT
Calm down just a minute, love. We can't
file a missing person's report until
that person's been missing for 48 hours.
Did you see your brother this morning?

HEIDI

I did, but . . .

DUTY SERGEANT

I understand you're worried, and that's fine. But he's not yet been missing for 48 hours. He could easily turn up at any moment, he may even already be back home. Perhaps he just lost track of time.

HEIDI

But I'm worried about some of the people he hangs around with.

DUTY SERGEANT

Look, the best I can do is to take your name and contact details, that way if we hear anything, we can contact you. And if you've not seen him by this time tomorrow, you can come back. OK?

HEDI

OK.

DUTY SERGEANT

What's your name, love.

HEIDI

Heidi Caradus.

DUTY SERGEANT

Caradus? Can you spell that for me?

DS SHELTON

Did you say Caradus?

HEIDI

(a little uncertainly)

Yes.

DS SHELTON

Is your brother's name Alex Caradus?

HEIDI

(anxiously)

Yes! Do you know where he is? Is he alright?

DS SHELTON

You'd better come with me.

Shelton leads Heidi down the corridor to the Interview Room. As they enter, Gray looks up from the notes he's been reading.

INSPECTOR GRAY

You're not Damien Woods!

HEIDI

No, I'm Heidi Caradus.

INSPECTOR GRAY

(sounding surprised)

Caradus?

DS SHELTON

She's Alex's sister.

INSPECTOR GRAY

You'd better sit down.

HEIDI

Look, what's going on?

INSPECTOR GRAY

Your brother's been involved in an accident.

HEIDI

Oh my God! I just knew something had happened.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Don't panic, he's OK. I found him and got the paramedics to take him to the hospital. I can assure you he's getting the best possible care.

HEIDI

What happened?

INSPECTOR GRAY

We're not entirely sure at the moment. But that's what we're investigating.

HEIDI

How did you find him?

INSPECTOR GRAY

I received an anonymous phone tip-off that someone had been assaulted and was in SuperCuts on Shap Road?

HEIDI

What the abandoned supermarket?

INSPECTOR GRAY

You know it?

HEIDI

(hesitantly)

Er, yes.

INSPECTOR GRAY

How come?

HEIDI

It's where we, . . . , er, the gang used to hang out.

INSPECTOR GRAY

You're in Damien Wood's gang?

HEIDI

Yes. Well was. I've always loved skateboarding.

INSPECTOR GRAY

(incredulously)

Skateboarding?

DS SHELTON

No need to sound so surprised, Sir. Girls can skate too you know.

INSPECTOR GRAY

What I meant was: Are you claiming it's a "skateboarding" gang?

HEIDI

Well yes, at least it was, mainly. At first.

DS SHELTON

Mainly?

HEIDI

Well, Damien liked making graffiti too.

DS SHELTON
Vandalism you mean?

HEIDI
Not really. He's really good. He wants
to go to art school you know.

INSPECTOR GRAY
But you left the gang after Max joined?

HEIDI
Yes.

INSPECTOR GRAY
Why?

HEIDI
Too much testosterone.

DS SHELTON
(stifling a laugh)
Are we talking about the same Max
O'Connor?

HEIDI
When he joined the gang, he and Damien
kept having a go at each other. Kept
trying to outdo each other.

(she pauses)
There's something about Max that just, .
. . I don't know, I find him creepy.

DS SHELTON
Creepy how?

HEIDI
Oh I don't know. He just has a way of
talking to you. Kind of feels like his
trying to make you do things, but just
with words. And if you don't do
something, he gets kind of nasty. But
just with words. Says nasty things.
Needles you. Makes you feel small.

INSPECTOR GRAY
So you left the gang because of Max?

HEIDI
Yes.

INSPECTOR GRAY

What about Alex?

HEIDI

No. He stayed in the gang. I don't think he liked Max all that much, but I think he thought he was harmless enough, just a bit rude.

(she pauses, becomes more hesitant)

Besides . . .

INSPECTOR GRAY

Besides . . . what Heidi?

Heidi is quiet for a few moments.

HEIDI

I think he's prepared to put up with it if it means he can stay out of the house, away from our parents.

INSPECTOR GRAY

They don't hurt you in any way, do they?

HEIDI

Oh no, nothing like that. They just row all the time, with each other. They shout a lot, sometimes break things. Then they kiss and make up. Then it starts up again. I think Alex has just got sick of being in the crossfire.

DS SHELTON

You care a lot about your brother, don't you?

HEIDI

Of course I do. We've been inseparable since we were born, at least 'til recently anyway.

DS SHELTON

Ah, so you're twins?

HEIDI

Yes.

DS SHELTON

That must make it even harder for you.

DS Shelton puts a comforting hand on Heidi's arm.

INSPECTOR GRAY

You've been really helpful, Heidi. You can rest assured that we'll do everything we can to find whoever did this to Alex. But you need to go see him as soon as possible. We'll get one of the officers to take you to the hospital. It's not far, just over the road.

As DS Shelton walks over to the Front Desk to arrange for someone to take her over to the hospital, she passes Bob, the stern looking uniformed policeman. He's on his way over to the Holding Cell.

BOB

(loudly enough to capture our full attention)

Damien Woods? Time for you to have a little stroll.

The policeman leads Damien from the Holding Cell to the Interview Room where Inspector Gray is waiting for him. DS Shelton joins them having left Heidi at the Front Desk.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Mr Woods, I am here to talk to you about some suspicions we have about some issues that have been happening recently in this area.

Damien stares sullenly at the Inspector.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Recently, we have had several reports from members of local community about the verbal and physical bullying of young teenagers as they walk to and from school, by people that both go to the school and some who do not. Some parents have been telling us that their children are returning from school terrified, with the addition of one mother calling the police to report that her 15 year old son had been kicked and punched.

The Inspector pauses. Damien makes no comment.

DS SHELTON

Sounds like your late brother's calling card.

Damien shifts his gaze briefly to DS Shelton, but still makes no comment.

INSPECTOR GRAY

In addition, many small businesses in the area have been directly affected by shoplifting and destruction of property. This is completely unfair on the business owners and staff in this community, as well as it making a dent in our local economy. We have been led to believe that these events have most likely been caused by one group of people. A local gang.

Again the Inspector pauses. Again Damien makes no comment.

INSPECTOR GRAY

You were apprehended and brought here, Mr Woods, due to your previous record. We want to ask you some questions in this regard. That ok?

Damien stares straight into the Inspector's eyes, but makes no response.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Well? Have you personally got anything to do with any of these incidents?

Damien doesn't blink, doesn't move. He just remains slouched in his chair. The Inspector stares back.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Is there any evidence that you have that may help us with this case?

Nothing.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Do you know anybody who might have committed such crimes?

Still nothing.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Well, if you are not going to respond,
than I will have to send you back to the
cells. Perhaps something will come back
to you there.

The Inspector begins to rise from his chair. Damien speaks
for the first time since arriving at the station.

DAMIEN

Not so fast, Inspector.

Inspector Gray sits back down.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Yes, Mr Woods? What would you like to
say?

DAMIEN

I know who's behind it all.

INSPECTOR GRAY

And who's that?

DAMIEN

Max O'Connor.

DS SHELTON

(derisively)

That scrawny little kid? You've got to
be kidding.

DAMIEN

Whatever.

INSPECTOR GRAY

That is a serious accusation you're
making Mr Woods. You need some evidence
before I officially put this towards the
case.

DAMIEN

Oh, I have evidence.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Yes, and what is it?

DAMIEN

Death comes to those who wait.

DS SHELTON

Quit wasting our time . . .

Inspector Gray interrupts the detective by raising his hand.

INSPECTOR GRAY

No, no wait. What did you say, Damien?

DAMIEN

Death comes to those who wait.

INSPECTOR GRAY

What's that supposed to mean?

DAMIEN

It's Max's catch phrase. His threat. If he says it to you, watch out. Sounds innocent enough, but bad things will happen to you.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Bad how?

Damien says nothing.

INSPECTOR GRAY

(more forcefully)

Bad how?

DAMIEN

Bad as it gets.

DS SHELTON

(angrily)

Quit playing games Mr Woods. If you've got something to say, say it.

DAMIEN

Max killed my brother.

INSPECTOR GRAY

(incredulously)

What?

Damien suddenly becomes very animated. He stands up quickly pushing the chair away behind him.

DAMIEN

(raising his voice)

I felt really guilty about it. I bought the drugs off Max that killed my brother. I couldn't go on knowing that it was me that handed him his death warrant that dreadful night. I found some rope in the garage. I tied a noose, stood on a box, and put my head through.

Both inspectors stare at Damien as leaps onto his chair mimes tying a noose, and putting his head through. They seem transfixed, unable to move.

DAMIEN

You know why I didn't just kick the box away?

INSPECTOR GRAY

(quietly)

Look, just get down Damien.

DAMIEN

(ignoring the inspector)

Cos I was bugged if I was gonna let that prick get away with it.

Damien jumps down off the chair and sits back down, arms crossed, facing the police officers.

The curtain falls to indicate the end of the first half.

HOSPITAL. SINGLE OCCUPANCY ROOM. EARLY HOURS

The curtain raises after the interval on a single occupancy hospital room. There is a single bed in the middle of the room surrounded by a screen. We can tell that it's a hospital room by the various medical paraphernalia spread around: drip stand, heart monitor (not switched on), oxygen canister, and a sign saying "Nil by Mouth" hanging on the end of the bed.

The door opens and a young BOY cautiously sticks his head round the door, creeps into the room and scurries under the bed. A few moments later the door opens again to reveal another young BOY, this one with his head wrapped in bandages. For a brief while the second boy simply stands in the doorway. He then starts to move forward, walking with a curious, straight legged gait, rocking from side to side as he moves. To complete the odd walk, he holds his arms out in front of him as he walks, zombie-style.

BOY 2

We are The Infected. We are here for
fresh blood.

The boy under the bed giggles.

BOY 2

We smell the blood of a healthy boy. We
are hungry for our lunch.

He starts to move slowly towards the bed. The boy under the bed shrieks and edges back further into the shadows. The boy with the bandaged head moves closer and closer.

Suddenly the door flies open for a third time. A harassed looking JUNIOR DOCTOR in her mid-20s, hurries in. She is wearing a long white coat and has a stethoscope around her neck.

DOCTOR

What the hell is going on in here?

The boy with the bandaged head dashes around the doctor, out the door, and down the corridor. The boy under the bed scurries out from one side of the bed which the doctor is walking round the other side. He quickly gets to his feet and sprints out of the room after his friend. The doctor walks over to the door, sticks her head into the corridor.

DOCTOR
(shouting loudly)
Will someone get those kids under
control? This is a hospital, not a
playground.

The doctor walks back into the room. She walks over to the bed and wheels the screen out of the way to reveal ALEX, a young lad of about 15, sitting up in bed. His head is tightly bound with a bandage, not unlike the young kid's who'd been larking round in the room a few moments before.

ALEX
Where shall I put this?

Alex is holding a disposable bedpan that he's just filled while behind the curtain. The doctor leans forward gingerly. She hurries back to the door.

DOCTOR
Nurse? Nurse!

No one comes running to her assistance. She turns round and walks back towards Alex.

DOCTOR
(quietly, but still audible)
Shit!

ALEX
You're not wrong!

The doctor removes several large sheets of thick blue paper from a roll hanging on the wall. She takes the proffered bedpan in one hand, and covers it using the wad of blue paper. She places the unsavoury parcel on the bedside table and moves the screen around it.

DOCTOR
Right, to business.

She goes to the foot of the bed, removes Alex's chart, and makes a few notes.

DOCTOR
Alex Caradus. Victim of assault.

Before the doctor can get any further, Heidi enters the room. The Doctor turns and stops her at the door.

HEIDI
(hesitantly)
I've come to see Alex Caradus. He's my
brother.

The doctor tries to usher her back to towards the corridor.

DOCTOR
Visiting hours are from 10am tomorrow
morning. You'll have to come back then.

HEIDI
I've got to talk to him. I've been
worried sick.

The doctor looks at the clock on the wall.

DOCTOR
You've 10 minutes. After that I need to
get him to the radiologist; he may have
a fractured skull. He took a nasty crack
to the back of the head.

Heidi gasps and puts her hand to her mouth.

HEIDI
Oh no!

She pushes past the doctor and over to Alex. The doctor
leaves the room.

Alex is lying in the bed with his eyes closed.

HEIDI
Alex.

Alex doesn't stir.

HEIDI
(more loudly)
Alex, are you OK?

Alex slowly opens one eye.

ALEX
(very feebly, very unlike when the
doctor was in the room)
Hello? Is that you Heidi? Are you there?

HEIDI

Oh my God! Are you alright Alex?

Alex suddenly sits up straight, a big smirk on his face, and opens both eyes wide.

ALEX

Just messing with you. Aside from a massive headache, I'm OK.

HEIDI

You look terrible.

ALEX

Gee thanks. Love your bedside manner.

HEIDI

I was so worried about you when you didn't come home. You're never normally that late.

ALEX

What about Mum and Dad? Were they worried too?

HEIDI

(hesitantly)

Of course they were. We all were.

ALEX

Liar. Bet they didn't even notice I was missing.

HEIDI

Course they did. In fact Dad remarked that at least that's one less mouth to feed!

ALEX

Oh very funny!

HEIDI

Sorry, couldn't resist.

ALEX

So what are they doing right now?
Rowing again?

HEIDI

Probably.

ALEX
But not about me?

HEIDI
No, probably not.

ALEX
Exactly. That's why I'm out with the
gang all the time.

HEIDI
That bloody gang. I knew it would end
badly.

ALEX
(indicating his bandaged head)
What's this got to do with the gang?

HEIDI
Would you have even been at the
supermarket if it hadn't been for the
gang?

ALEX
Maybe.

HEIDI
Liar.

ALEX
Anyway, you've changed your tune. You
used to be into the skating every bit as
much as me.

HEIDI
That was before.

ALEX
Before what?

HEIDI
I don't want to argue with you. Look,
are they feeding you in here?

ALEX
I've not eaten since I arrived. Doctor
won't let me until after the X-ray. Just
in case they need to operate.

HEIDI

Oh God, surely it can't be that bad.

ALEX

Who knows. I can drink though, and I am thirsty.

HEIDI

That a hint?

ALEX

Yup. There's a vending machine near the lift. Coke would be nice.

HEIDI

OK, I'll be back in a few minutes.

Before Heidi returns, LIAM, a good look athletic lad of about 16 walks into the room and straight up to Alex's bed.

ALEX

Hi Liam. Did you bring me any grapes?

LIAM

(looking shifty)

I'm on the run.

Alex laughs.

LIAM

No seriously.

ALEX

(still laughing)

Well you better get a move on then, Heidi could be back at any minute. She went to get a drink from the vending machine.

LIAM

I had to make sure you were OK.

ALEX

(pointing to the side of his bandaged head)

Apart from the obvious, I'm fine. How did you know where I was?

LIAM

Followed the ambulance.

ALEX

So you got to the supermarket eventually then?

LIAM

Eventually?

ALEX

Yeah, eventually. Max's text said 9pm, that's when I got there. No one else was there though. I skated around for a while. Got in a few good flips and a jump. Then suddenly: BAM. Whack on the back of the head, and I'm out cold.

LIAM

So did you topple over backwards and bang your head on the floor. Something like that?

ALEX

Possibly. But the doctor keeps referring to "the assault".

Heidi walks in holding two cans of coke. Neither boy notice her arrival.

HEIDI

Liam, what are you doing here?

Liam jumps.

LIAM

(nervously)

Hi Heidi. I was just . . .

ALEX

Visiting his old pal in hospital! He followed the ambulance in. What a mate!

LIAM

Shhh.

HEIDI

How did you know Alex was in the ambulance? Thought you said you were alone Alex.

ALEX

I was.

LIAM

Well, I . . .

HEIDI

You . . . what exactly?

LIAM

It's complicated.

HEIDI

Well un-complicate it then.

LIAM

(sighs)

We got to the supermarket at 10. Through the window as usual. Thought maybe Alex couldn't get away tonight. Skated around for a while then. . .

(looking at Alex)

. . . then I think I might have landed on you.

ALEX

What?

LIAM

Well I didn't know it was you under the plastic bags. Well, not at first anyway. Then the cops came and we scarpered.

Heidi pushes roughly at Liam's chest.

HEIDI

(angrily)

Hey hey hey hey hey. Back up just a second. What do you mean "not at first, . . . and then we scarpered"?

ALEX

Leave it Heidi. He just said the cops came. I'd've scarpered too; who wouldn't?

HEIDI

(facing Liam but talking to Alex)

But he was there long enough to know that he'd landed on *YOU*. He knew it was *YOU* in the ambulance. Explain!

Liam takes a few steps backwards. Heidi matches him step for step, not letting him move out of the way.

LIAM
(shakily)

I landed on plastic rubbish bags.
Something under them groaned. Rummaged
around, saw it was Alex, but the cops
showed up.

Heidi starts to beat Liam on the chest with the heel of her hands, her hands balled into fists.

HEIDI
You sod! How could you?

LIAM
Be reasonable. The paramedics got him to
hospital, and here he is.

HEIDI
No thanks to you! But you're going to
make it right.

She grabs his arm and twists it up behind his back, and starts to push him towards the door.

LIAM
What are you doing?

HEIDI
You're coming with me, the police
station's just over the road. You're
going to tell them everything you know
to help the police catch whoever it was
who did this to Alex.

LIAM
I can't go to a police station.

Ignoring his protests, she frog-marches him out of the hospital room.

As soon as their footsteps have subsided, Max furtively pokes his head round the door. He's been outside the door for some time waiting for Alex to be alone. He now hurries over to his bedside.

MAX
Thank God you're alright.

ALEX

Max! You just missed the scrap of the century.

MAX

Was that Heidi and Liam?

ALEX

You should have heard them.

Alex starts to laugh.

ALEX

Heidi really lost it. Then she did a citizen's arrest thing and started to drag Liam to the police station.

MAX

(sounding shocked)

She did what?

ALEX

Funny thing is, the doctor said the police are already here. They want to talk to me. She could have saved herself a trip.

Max starts to look edgy.

ALEX

Anyway, what happened to you?

MAX

Happened to me when?

ALEX

At the supermarket. Seems like you got there late.

MAX

(now sounding very distracted)

Oh yeah, we er, got a little held up.

ALEX

Doing what?

MAX

Look, don't tell the cops anything, right?

ALEX

What's up?

Max says nothing more. We hear Inspector Gray's and Detective Sergeant Shelton's voices just outside the room.

INSPECTOR GRAY O.S.

It's got to be down this corridor somewhere.

DS SHELTON O.S.

Here we are, sir. Room 1408.

INSPECTOR GRAY O.S.

Ah, well done Kerry.

DS SHELTON O.S.

The numbers, they ascend. It's a cunning system, sir!

Max quickly ducks behind the screen next to the bed.

Inspector Gray walks into the hospital room and straight up to Alex's bed. Shelton enters the room and joins Gray at Alex's bedside. Both officers have their back to the door, and neither has even glanced at the screen. While Alex is being interviewed, he'll occasionally look over to where Max is hiding.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Alex Caradus?

ALEX

(hesitantly)

Yes?

INSPECTOR GRAY

My name is Inspector Gray, and this is Detective Sergeant Shelton. We need to ask you a few questions about what happened. That OK?

ALEX

Yes, sure.

INSPECTOR GRAY

So, how you doing lad?

ALEX

Aside from having a massive headache you mean? Oh fine!

INSPECTOR GRAY

You were found at SuperCuts, the abandoned supermarket on Shap Road. In fact, it was me who found you and called the paramedics.

ALEX

(humbly)

Er, thanks.

INSPECTOR GRAY

What were you doing there, at the abandoned supermarket?

Alex glances at the screen.

ALEX

Skateboarding.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Why there?

ALEX

Well it's got great spaces and great obstacles. Lots of jumping potential. And . . .

DS SHELTON

And it's private property!

ALEX

But it's boarded up and doing nothing.

INSPECTOR GRAY

What time did you get there?

ALEX

9pm.

INSPECTOR GRAY

You're sure it was 9pm.

ALEX

Yes. I got a text saying: be there at 9.

INSPECTOR GRAY
So you weren't alone then?

Again Alex looks at the screen.

ALEX
(hesitating)
Well I was alone, but only because the others hadn't showed up yet.

INSPECTOR GRAY
So you go as a gang to the supermarket?

ALEX
Kind of.

INSPECTOR GRAY
How did you get into the supermarket?

ALEX
Through the window.

INSPECTOR GRAY
So you were skateboarding on your own last night. What happened?

ALEX
I done a few jumps. Then did a line of end overs, finished with a fan flip and caught the board. Was standing there feeling pretty proud of myself when WHAM, got smashed in the back of the head. That's all I remember till I woke up here.

INSPECTOR GRAY
So as far as you know, no one else was there?

ALEX
Well, I didn't think so.

INSPECTOR GRAY
Who else is in your gang, lad?

Alex sneaks another glance at the curtain.

ALEX
Just kids from school.

INSPECTOR GRAY

What else does your gang get up to?

ALEX

Nothing really. Maybe we graffiti a little, that's all.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Do you have a gang leader?

Alex says nothing.

INSPECTOR GRAY

What about Damien Woods? He ever skate with your gang?

ALEX

Yes. Well he used to, not so much anymore.

INSPECTOR GRAY

What about Max O'Connor?

ALEX

Yeah, sometimes.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Are there any other gangs in the area? Rivals perhaps.

ALEX

Not that I know of.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Look, thing is, there have been a number of complaints and bullying in the area. Did you know that?

ALEX

Er no. No I didn't.

INSPECTOR GRAY

We've got to get to the bottom of it. Can't be having young lads like you being attacked, now can we?

Before Alex can answer, the doctor returns to the room accompanied by two porters.

DOCTOR

Time's up gentlemen. Time for Alex to go
for an X-ray.

Shelton spins round and glares at the doctor.

DOCTOR

Sorry! Time's up . . . officers?

INSPECTOR GRAY

Thanks doctor. I think we have
everything need, for the time being
anyway.

Gray and Shelton leave the room. One porter walks to the head of the bed, the other to the foot. They start to manoeuvre the bed towards the door. The doctor exits first. Just before the porters reach the door, Alex raises his hand and beckons to the porter near his head. The porter bends down so that Alex can whisper something. Alex points to the screen next to the bed.

PORTER 1

(to Porter 2)

Hold up a second Chris.

Porter 2 turns round. Porter 1 walks over to the curtain and moves it to one side. Max is no longer there (he had slipped out of the room unnoticed at some point while the police officers were interviewing Alex). There's just the bedside table with Alex's wrapped bedpan. The porter produces a large yellow plastic bag and nonchalantly places the bedpan inside and ties up the end of the bag. The porter then walks back to Alex's bed, dumps the sealed bag on Alex's chest, and the two porters wheel Alex out of the room.

Stage hands now appear and reset the stage back into the police station, with its Front Desk, Waiting Room, and Holding Cell.

POLICE STATION.WAITING ROOM

In the waiting room area are Mr and Mrs O'Connor, and Samantha and her Mother. At the Front Desk is the Duty Sergeant we last saw before the interval.

MR O'CONNOR
Where's Max?

MRS O'CONNOR
Toilet I think.

MR O'CONNOR
I've just come from there.

MRS O'CONNOR
That's odd. I'm sure that's where he said he was going.

MR O'CONNOR
Why didn't you keep your eye on him?

MRS O'CONNOR
Well he seemed upset, said he wanted to splash some water on his face, and . . .

MR O'CONNOR
And you believed him? He twists you round his little finger you know.

MRS O'CONNOR
I'm sure he'll be back any mo. Did you get through to the office?

MR O'CONNOR
Yes. I finally got a decent signal halfway down the road.

MRS O'CONNOR
They OK with you getting a later train?

MR O'CONNOR
Yes, but it's bloody embarrassing having to ask.

Max walks in through the main door and passed the Front Desk. He tries to walk through the Waiting Room to where his parents are without being seen. He fails. He slumps into the

chair next to his mother. Mr O'Connor leans across his wife and slaps Max on the back of the head.

MR O'CONNOR
Where have you been?

MAX
Outside, needed some air.

MR O'CONNOR
I was outside. Didn't see you go by.

MAX
You wouldn't, you were on your phone, taking an important call. As usual. You wouldn't've noticed me if I'd've trotted by on horseback. You never pay me any attention.

Mr O'Connor leans over again. Mrs O'Connor grabs his arm.

MRS O'CONNOR
(quietly)
Not here love.

Mr O'Connor lowers his arm.

Mrs O'Connor
Look, I've really got to get going. I need to get some sleep then prepare for my case this afternoon.

Mrs O'Connor heads towards the exit.

Just as Mrs O'Connor is about to reach the main door, it flies open and Heidi marches into the police station straight up to the Front Desk for the second time. This time she has Liam in tow.

Mrs O'Connor exits unnoticed, muttering to herself as she goes.

DUTY SERGEANT
(to Heidi)
Hello again Miss, and how can I help you this time?

HEIDI
Liam here has some information that he'd like to give you.

She pushes Liam towards to the Front Desk.

DUTY SERGEANT

That so?

LIAM

Yes. I was at the abandoned supermarket earlier. I found the lad that was knocked unconscious. I might have . . .

DUTY SERGEANT

Just a second, lad.

At that moment, Inspector Gray and DS Sergeant arrive back at the station. Shelton goes straight through to the Interview Room. Gray waves to the Duty Sergeant. The Duty Sergeant beckons the Inspector over.

DUTY SERGEANT

(to the Inspector)

Inspector Gray, have you get a second.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Sure.

DUTY SERGEANT

I think you might want to talk to this chap. He has some information for you about the incident at the abandoned supermarket.

INSPECTOR GRAY

What's your name, son?

LIAM

Liam, sir.

INSPECTOR GRAY

And you think you may have some information for me?

LIAM

Yes sir, I was there.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Were you now?

LIAM

I was heading out when you arrived.

INSPECTOR GRAY
Out the window by any chance?

LIAM
Er, yes.

INSPECTOR GRAY
And I take it you know Alex Caradus.

LIAM
Yes I do.

INSPECTOR GRAY
You are definitely someone we want to talk to. Look, take a sit in the waiting area over there and we'll come and get you in about five minutes.

The Inspector walks off to the Interview Room where DS Shelton has already sat down and started to spread her notes over the desk.

Liam heads towards the waiting area. He suddenly notices that Samantha's sitting there with her mother. She looks up as he approaches. She runs over to him.

SAMANTHA
How could you do that to me?

LIAM
Shhhh.

SAMANTHA
Don't you shush at me! What were you thinking? The police came to the house and took me away and . . .

Liam interrupts Samantha.

LIAM
Look I can explain.

Samantha's mother has just noticed Liam and hurries over.

MRS GEORGE
(with voice raised)
You! What are you doing here? Finally caught up with you did they? Finally decided to man up did you?

LIAM

Look I . . .

He's interrupted by the Duty Sergeant calling over from the Front Desk.

DUTY SERGEANT

Pipe down over there will you folks.
Some of us are trying to get some shut-eye over here!

The three of them sit with arms folded looking distinctly less than comfortable.

Our attention is now drawn to the Interview Room where the Inspector has just stood up, walked over to the door and closed it.

INTERVIEW ROOM

INSPECTOR GRAY

So where are we now then Kerry?

DS SHELTON

Well, this is what we've got so far:

Samantha: Little Miss Perfect with a possible coke habit.

Max: Wimpy kid, who may or may not be playing mind games with us.

Woods: Quiet and broody kid from a very dodgy family with form.

Alex: Assault victim, likeable enough kid, but with an unfortunate habit of B&E, trespass and petty vandalism.

INSPECTOR GRAY

And now another lad's turned up. Brought in by the feisty Heidi. What's going on with all these kids?

DS SHELTON

It all depends on which of the little brats you believe.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Who do you think's lying?

DS SHELTON

All of them, possibly, to some degree.
Except maybe Heidi. Who's the kid she
brought in?

INSPECTOR GRAY

A skateboarder named Liam, claims he was
in the supermarket just before I
arrived.

Gray and Shelton are both silent for a few moments.

INSPECTOR GRAY

(muttering under his breath)

Mmm. Liam Liam, liar liar. Liam Liam,
liar liar.

DS SHELTON

What's that sir?

INSPECTOR GRAY

We've got two Liams: Samantha's
boyfriend Liam, and now this
skateboarder Liam.

DS SHELTON

So what?

INSPECTOR GRAY

Is it a common name round here? Liam?

DS SHELTON

Dunno. So, so. What are you getting at,
sir?

INSPECTOR GRAY

Could they be the same Liam? Samantha's
boyfriend and the skateboarder at the
front desk?

DS SHELTON

You think Pretty Boy out there and
Little Miss Perfect are a drug running
double act?

INSPECTOR GRAY

Why not?

DS SHELTON

He seems like a big kid, more interested in skateboarding than anything else.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Like Damien you mean?

DS SHELTON

Damien's different.

INSPECTOR GRAY

How so?

DS SHELTON

Well you know the Woods family better than most. In and out of trouble, and correctional facilities. Let's just say, I don't think that apple's fallen far from the tree.

INSPECTOR GRAY

I'm not so sure. It's hard to ignore his accusations aimed at Max. I'm sure there's something he's not telling us, or that he is telling us, but that we've missed. In the meantime, let's get Liam in here. Maybe he can shed some more light.

The Inspector leaves the room and returns to the Waiting Area. He beckons Liam over, and returns to the Interview Room with him. Liam sits at the desk across from the Inspector and DS Shelton.

INSPECTOR GRAY

So you reckon you were at the supermarket on Shap Road yesterday evening.

LIAM

Yes I was.

INSPECTOR GRAY

And you climbed out the window when I arrived?

LIAM

Yes.

INSPECTOR GRAY

So what were you doing there?

LIAM

You know, skateboarding, graffiti, the usual stuff.

INSPECTOR GRAY

And did you find anything out of the ordinary?

LIAM

Yes. I found an unconscious body lying under a pile of rubbish bags. Well I didn't so much find him as land on him.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Do you know who that unconscious body was?

LIAM

Er, yes. It was my mate, Alex.

INSPECTOR GRAY

And you just left him there?

LIAM

(meekly)

Yes.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Why?

LIAM

I saw the police lights and panicked.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Hmm. After you'd gone, and the paramedics had taken your friend to the hospital, I noticed some newly sprayed graffiti on the wall: "Death comes to those that wait". Does that mean anything to you?

LIAM

It's our gang's motto.

INSPECTOR GRAY

What does it mean?

LIAM
Waiting for death, or something like
that.

INSPECTOR GRAY
Who came up with that?

LIAM
Max, I think.

INSPECTOR GRAY
Max O'Connor?

LIAM
Yes.

INSPECTOR GRAY
Do you know a Samantha George?

LIAM
Er, yes.

INSPECTOR GRAY
Do you know her well?

Liam
She's my girlfriend.

INSPECTOR GRAY
We spoke to her earlier.

LIAM
(trying to sound surprised)
Really?

DS SHELTON
Don't try to sound so surprised; we saw
you talking to her when we returned to
the police station.

INSPECTOR GRAY
Any idea what we might have been talking
to Samantha about?

Liam says nothing.

INSPECTOR GRAY
I'm sure you could guess if you put your
mind to it.

Liam still says nothing.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Perhaps if I used the word "possession" it might help. And if I told you that Samantha George had been arrested for possession, would that surprise you?

LIAM

(quietly)

No it wouldn't.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Why?

LIAM

(even more quietly, and after a long pause)

Because I gave her something to look after for me.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Well that's one way of putting it. Not your night really, is it son? Your friend gets beaten up, you get caught vandalising private property, and your girlfriend gets caught in possession of your drugs.

LIAM

Is Samantha going to be in big trouble?

INSPECTOR GRAY

Not as much as you are. I don't think she knew what she was holding. I think she's only guilty of having poor judgement. We're willing to let her off with a verbal warning. Which means it won't go down on her record.

LIAM

(weakly)

Thanks.

INSPECTOR GRAY

But you, on the other hand, are another matter.

Liam looks down glumly.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Dealing is a very serious offence, Liam.

LIAM

I only did it to shut him up. To keep him from badgering me. I only ever wanted to skateboard, like we did with Damien, but . . .

INSPECTOR GRAY

(interrupting)

Damien Woods?

LIAM

Yes.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Damien's not in your gang anymore?

LIAM

No. He and Max don't really see eye to eye. Damien was cool. But Max likes to act the tough guy, even though he's small. He made us rob things, and stuff.

INSPECTOR GRAY

How did he "make" you?

LIAM

He kind of gets under your skin, and never lets go. He finds out something about you, and taunts you with it. He just goes on and on and on and on until finally you give in to anything.

INSPECTOR GRAY

But not Woods?

LIAM

No. He skated, painted, watched films, and that was it. He would never back down to Max though. And in the end, he just stopped hanging around with us.

The two police officers exchange glances. No one says anything for a few moments.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Liam, if we were to let you off with a written warning, that's something that would be on your record but would only be considered if you offended in the future, would you be prepared to testify against Max if we find sufficient evidence to charge him with an offence?

LIAM

(quietly)

Yes. Yes I would.

INSPECTOR

Good lad.

(to Shelton)

You take Liam back to the front desk while I fetch Damien. This shouldn't take long.

INTERVIEW ROOM

Inspector Gray, DS Shelton, and Damien are now reassembled in the Interview Room.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Damien, where were you at 8pm last night?

DAMIEN

At the cinema.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Can you prove it?

Damien rummages in his pocket and puts a cinema ticket on the table.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Yes, but can you prove you were in the cinema watching this film? Do you have an alibi?

DAMIEN

Ask the projectionist. She knows me. We always chat about the films. I always see her before and afterwards.

INSPECTOR GRAY

I will of course check this alibi. But I'm satisfied you're telling the truth. You're free to go.

DAMIEN and DS SHELTON
(almost in unison)

Just like that?

INSPECTOR GRAY

You have an alibi for the crime for which you were originally arrested.

Gray looks at his watch.

INSPECTOR GRAY

You've been here for 12 hours already. After we're finished with our next interview, I for one am heading home. So we won't have anything else on you to chat about in the next 12 hours, at which point, we'd legally be obliged to release you anyway. This is, after all, not a murder investigation.

Inspector Gray stands up and leads Damien to the Front Desk. Shelton walks over to Mr O'Connor and Max in the waiting area and gets them to follow her back to the Interview Room.

INSPECTOR GRAY

(to the duty sergeant)

Can you grab this lad's belongings? He'll be leaving us shortly.

The Duty Sergeant reaches under the desk and produces the plastic tray containing Damien's belongings. He places a clipboard on the desk alongside the tray.

DUTY SERGEANT

Sign here to acknowledge the return of your personal items.

Damien does so.

DUTY SERGEANT

Many thanks. You're free to go.

INSPECTOR GRAY

(quietly to Damien)

You know, you could have gone home a whole lot earlier if you'd just mentioned your alibi at the outset.

DAMIEN

But if I had, would Max O'Connor still be here?

Gray returns to the Interview Room smiling and shaking his head.

Damien takes the tray containing his belongings over to the furthest chair from the Interview Room in the now empty Waiting Room. He sits down and replaces the laces in his shoes. He stands, and puts the belt back on his trousers. He folds the tie and puts it in his pocket. He then puts up the hood on his jacket, and sits down again on the chair.

INTERVIEW ROOM

MR O'CONNOR

Finally, you're ready to see us again. I'm a busy man you know.

INSPECTOR GRAY

It's been a busy night. Your wife not joining us again?

MR O'CONNOR

She had to go home to get some sleep. She's got an important case this morning. And I haven't got all day, I've got to get off to Brussels in the afternoon.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Brussels?

MR O'CONNOR

Yes, legal work, European Parliament. By the way, was that the Woods boy I just saw at the front desk?

INSPECTOR GRAY

I'm not at liberty to comment, sir.

MAX

It was, Dad.

MR O'CONNOR

What are you letting him go for? He's the root cause of all this mess. You should be detaining him, not me.

Mr O'Connor looks at his watch.

MR O'CONNOR

Look, are you going to charge my lad, or not. Either way, let's get this sorted shall we?

INSPECTOR GRAY

Oh we will be charging Max, Mr O'Connor. The only question is: With what?

MR O'CONNOR

What do you mean by that?

INSPECTOR GRAY

Well let's just see where this interview takes us shall we? Now Max, where were you at 9pm yesterday evening?

MAX

(without hesitating)

Doing my homework.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Do you have an alibi?

MAX

My parents.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Can you corroborate that, Mr O'Connor?

MR O'CONNOR

Yes of course. If that's where Max said he was, that's where he was: At home doing his homework.

INSPECTOR GRAY

That's not good enough, Mr O'Connor, as I'm sure you know. Do you actually remember seeing your son working on his homework at 9pm?

MR O'CONNOR

Look, it's not me on trial here you know.

INSPECTOR GRAY

No you're not on trial here. Nobody is.

Gray looks down at the notes on the desk.

INSPECTOR GRAY

Max, yesterday, I saw graffitied on a wall a slogan: Death comes to those that wait.

MAX

"Who".

INSPECTOR GRAY

Me, I found the slogan ...

MAX

(interrupting the Inspector)

No "who". The phrase is Death comes to those "who" wait, not those "that" wait.

MR O'CONNOR

(between clenched teeth)

Max! This isn't helping.

INSPECTOR GRAY

On the contrary, it helps a lot. If I told you that I saw that phrase freshly painted on the wall of an abandoned supermarket in Shap Road earlier today, would that surprise you?

MR O'CONNOR

My client doesn't have to answer that.

INSPECTOR GRAY

I beg your pardon.

MR O'CONNOR

(quickly correcting himself)

I mean my son. My son doesn't have to answer that.

INSPECTOR GRAY

I think that's up to Max. Would it surprise you?

Max says nothing for a while. His gaze shifts from Gray to his father, then back to Gray.

MAX

No, it would not surprise me at all.

INSPECTOR GRAY

I suggest you were in that abandoned supermarket until shortly before I arrived.

MAX

Yes I was.

INSPECTOR GRAY

And I suggest it was you who painted that slogan.

MAX

Yes it was.

INSPECTOR GRAY

What does it mean Max?

MAX

Be decisive. If you want something, you've got to take it. If you do nothing, you get nothing. Death comes to those who wait.

INSPECTOR GRAY

I suggest that you were there, at the abandoned supermarket, earlier last night. At least an hour before I arrived.

MAX

Well I suggest . . .

MR O'CONNOR

(to Max with a forced smile)

Fermez la bouche vous petite merde!

MAX

(shrugging)

Ou . . . qu'allez-vous faire?

INSPECTOR GRAY

In English, please gentlemen.

MR O'CONNOR
I was just advising my client, . . .

(he corrects himself)
I mean my son, not to incriminate
himself.

Max slumps forward on the table, placing his head on his
arms. His shoulders start to shake.

INSPECTOR GRAY
Max? Are you OK?

Max sits up. Tears are rolling down his cheeks.

MAX
Yes it was me. All of it.

INSPECTOR GRAY
So you admit breaking in to SuperCuts on
Shap Road?

MAX
Yes.

INSPECTOR GRAY
You admit to being the gang leader and
to bullying local children?

MAX
Yes.

INSPECTOR GRAY
And to luring Alex to the supermarket?

Max looks at the inspector and holds his gaze for a few
seconds before responding.

MAX
That too.

INSPECTOR GRAY
And to assaulting Alex?

Suddenly Max has a smirk on his face.

MAX
Yes, that was me too.

MR O'CONNOR
(clearly shocked)

Why?

MAX
To show you that I can be a bully too,
just like you. You should be proud. You
spend your entire life manipulating
other people, making them do things they
don't want to do. Twisting people to
your will. Perhaps you'll take more
notice of me now.

No one says anything for a while. Mr O'Connor stares at Max
in disbelief. Shelton and Gray exchange glances. Gray nods
to Shelton, she starts to gather her notes together.

INSPECTOR GRAY
(quietly)
We'll be charging your son.

MR O'CONNOR
Yes, of course.

INSPECTOR GRAY
Please come with me. Max will have to
stay here for the time being.

The inspector, Mr O'Connor, and DS Shelton leave the room,
Shelton locking the door behind her.

INTERVIEW ROOM

Max looks up as he hears someone UNLOCKING the door. In walks a figure wearing a hoodie who closes the door and fiddles with lock from the inside. The lights on the stage dim slightly. On turning around, we see that the figure is wearing a Guy Fawkes mask.

MAX

What the . . . ?

The figure pushes the mask back. It's Damien. He places a bunch of lock picks on the table. He then takes a few steps backwards, folds his arms, and leans against the wall.

MAX

(eying the lock picks)

I see you've picked up some of your family's bad habits.

Damien says nothing.

MAX

So you've come to gloat then have you Woods?

Damien still says nothing.

MAX

Gloat as much as you like, but this suits me just fine. In fact, this has done me a favour. You can keep your childish gangs, I've got bigger fish to fry. Time in a young offenders' facility will do my credibility nothing but good.

They stare inscrutably at each other for a few seconds. Max looks down at the table.

MAX

(matter-of-factly)

Funny thing is, I was framed.

DAMIEN

(after a short pause)

I know you were.

Max looks up at him sharply.

MAX

You do? How?

DAMIEN

I framed you.

MAX

You?

Damien says nothing more.

MAX

My God. It was you who tipped off the police.

Damien shrugs.

MAX

You told them where we would be and when. You cheeky bugger.

Damien raises an eyebrow.

MAX

Well, well, well.

Max is silent for a few moments. He seems to be thinking about something. A thought suddenly comes to him.

MAX

So you must have told Alex to get to the supermarket at the wrong time, but he thought it was me.

(another pause)

Which means you must have . . .

He looks up and sees that Damien is waving a mobile phone, which he now places on the table alongside the lock picks.

MAX

. . . cloned my phone. Another of your family's nasty little habits. But then that also means . . .

DAMIEN

Yes?

MAX

. . . you must have beaten Alex to a pulp.

Max starts to laugh. Damien looks at him uneasily.

DAMIEN

What's so funny?

Max continues to laugh. He's beginning to sound maniacal. He puts his head on the table and starts shaking nearly convulsively. Damien stares down at him with increasing alarm. Finally Max looks up. He is red in the face and has a little drool dripping from the side of his mouth.

MAX

You know what Damien? You'd've been quite an asset to my gang. We're not so different, you and I. We could have been some team.

The lights dim and the curtain falls.

The End