

# **The Big Pink Ones.**

**A play**

**By**

**Ian F Harris.**

When the room is quiet, the daylight almost gone  
It seems there's something I should know  
Well, I ought to leave but the rain, it never stops  
And I've no particular place to go  
Just when I think I'm winning  
When I've broken every door  
The ghosts of my life  
Blow wilder than before  
Just when I thought I could not be stopped  
When my chance came to be king  
The ghosts of my life  
Blew wilder than the wind  
Well, I'm feeling nervous, now I find myself alone  
The simple life's no longer there  
Once I was so sure, now the doubt inside my mind  
Comes and goes but leads nowhere  
Just when I think I'm winning  
When I've broken every door  
The ghosts of my life  
Blow wilder than before  
Just when I thought I could not be stopped  
When my chance came to be king  
The ghosts of my life  
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**LIGHTS UP. SCENE I.**

**The stage is in darkness lit only by sudden flashes of lightning and crashes of thunder.**

**There's one hell of a storm going on (and it lasts the entire play). Rain beats hard on the roof.**

**On each lightning flash we catch a glimpse of a sparsely furnished room.**

**There's the door that leads from a corridor into the room.**

**In the room there's a table with a telephone, an ancient cassette player and a small white box on it.**

**A couple of chairs and an exercise bike. Small ornaments are dotted liberally around the room.**

**A single bulb with an ancient lampshade hangs down from the ceiling.**

**There's also a sideboard with a large hamster cage on it. We can see the hamster's wheel in amongst the straw and sawdust.**

**An unseen kitchen and bedroom leads off to one side.**

**We hear a door slam and footsteps running up stairs.**

**PAULINE appears in the corridor. She carries a large shopping bag and wears a wet raincoat and hat.**

**She fiddles with a key and opens the door to the room. She ENTERS then closes the door behind her.**

**She turns on the light allowing us a better view of her and her room.**

**We were right first time...it's sparse.**

**PAULINE:** (She appears to be addressing her remarks to someone unseen) My God. I think this must be what the end of the world is going to be like...assuming that this isn't it of course. I'll be with you in a minute...I've got to get out of these wet clothes before I catch my death. **(Laughs)** Mum always used to say that... *'you'd better get out of those wet clothes before you catch your death'*

**Laying her shopping bag on the table she heads off towards her (unseen) bedroom continuing what appears to be a one-sided conversation as she goes...but before she totally EXITS out of sight, she stops suddenly concerned that a couple of ornaments appear to be out of place.**

PAULINE: No...no...no that's not right all. I don't remember moving that.

**She re-aligns them...satisfied she EXITS. Her 'conversation' continues from offstage.**

PAULINE: **(Offstage)** No wonder I'm like I am. I mean fancy telling a kid that *'you'll catch your death'*. Talk about scary. You'd think parents would be a bit more careful about what they fill their kids heads with wouldn't you? Shocking. You know I used to lie awake at night hoping that I'd got my wet things off in time to be alive in the morning. Adults eh? It's a wonder any of us grow up sane...present company accepted. **(Pause)** Anyway, how have you been sweetie? What sort of day have you had?

**PAULINE reappears dressed in a tracksuit and carrying a feather duster. Wielding the duster she begins some serious housework in which she appears engrossed and very particular, moving various items to their 'correct' place.**

PAULINE: Let me tell you... I have had one hell of a day. The voices. They would not leave me alone. From the moment I got out of bed. *Do this. Do that.* It's been a nightmare and very tiring. Like a boxing match. Constant. *Ding-ding round one. Yabber, yabber, yabber, yabber.* Nonstop. Hour after hour. *However...*you will be pleased to know that the new pills...**(she points her feather duster at the small white box on the table)** are most definitely working. The voices seem kind of... muted. It's like they're outside, or trapped in a box somewhere. They're not so loud...not so...boomy...and this is the thing...not so confident. They sound distant, they sound so alone that I feel almost sorry for them, and I'll tell you something else, it's like they know. Like they know darn well that their time is coming to an end. Like they're aware that they're under attack from the finest that medical science can provide. **(Laughs)** Spooky I know...but a relief all the same. I think that we might be on the right track this time. Anyway. Have you been OK? I feel so guilty about leaving you alone all day but someone has to earn the money to buy us nice things....

PAULINE: ...and talking of nice things...

**She stops dusting and reaches into the shopping bag on the table.**

PAULINE: I've bought you something.

**She reaches into the bag and brings out a plastic toy.**

PAULINE: It squeaks. And hopefully will keep you entertained for ages...or not.  
Anyway...see what you think.

**She squeezes the toy and sure enough it squeaks.**

**She walks to the hamster cage opens the door and pushes the squeaky toy in before closing the cage door again.**

PAULINE: There. Oh...and that's not all...something else. As it's pay day and I'm feeling generous...*taraa*.

**She dips into the bag again and pulls out a bag of hamster treats.**

PAULINE: Sweeties. Your favourite. Which you can have...and not before... after my exercise time.

**PAULINE waves the treats tantalisingly at the cage and places them on the table. She presses a button on the cassette machine. Reggae...Bob Marley...'Two little Birds'. She sits astride the exercise bike and begins to peddle. As she peddles she sings...**

PAULINE: **(Singing)** *'Don't worry about a thing...etc...'cause every little thing gonna be all right'*

**A scruffily dressed man (BILL) appears in the dimly lit corridor. He thumps the door, hard.**

***Thump, thump, thump.***

**PAULINE freezes.**

**A moment...Bob Marley sings on until she reaches to the tape machine and switches it off.**

**She sits on her bike still and in silence.**

**A pause...BILL bangs the door again.**

*Thump, thump, thump.*

**PAULINE draws in a breath.**

*Thump, thump, thump.*

**Dust falls from the shaking door.**

**A pause.**

**BILL:** (Gently) Pauline? Pauline? **(Pause. Harsher now).** *Pauline?* It's no good pretending no good at all. I saw you come in. **(Pause)** Pauline it's Bill. I just wanted to remind you that it's Friday. I know you get paid today and I'd like my money on time for a change. **(Pause)** You hear me? Of course you do. **(Pause).** You're listening to my every word. **(Pause)** Pauline. I know you're in there. Don't ignore me. It's rude you ignoring me like that. I'm the landlord...and I saw you come in. So I know you're there. I saw you walk up the path. No umbrella. Wet right through. Ridiculous. Everyone knew it was going to rain today. Everyone except you it seems. Perhaps you think the rain won't fall on you eh? **(laughs)** Do you? Is that what you think? That the rain won't fall on you? **(Pause...then gentler again)** Are you OK? You'd better get out of those wet clothes and quick. You wouldn't want to catch your death would you? **(Pause. Frustrated)** Pauline? Pauline for God's sake I know you're in there I heard you talking. Why do you do this? It's bad manners for a start. For God's sake Pauline. You can't treat me like this. It's not on. You owe me. You should be treating me with respect. I am after all, the landlord.

**PAULINE:** I can't come to the door. I'm not dressed.

**BILL:** Ah. There you are. I knew it. I knew you were in. I saw you. Are you going to open the door or what? This is silly.

PAULINE: I can't. I told you I'm not dressed.

BILL: Hey. Have you got someone in there with you? Have you? **(Pause)** I could hear you talking all the way downstairs. You know it's not allowed don't you? Like pets. They're not allowed either. Visitors and pets. Both nasty smelly things. Both not allowed. If I told mother that you had visitors you know what would happen don't you? You'd be out. Out on your ear. **(Pause)** Pauline open the door please. I need to talk to you.

PAULINE: Come back later. When I'm dressed.

BILL: Bloody hell Pauline put on a dressing gown. Put on that red frilly one. I like that one.

PAULINE: **(Shocked)** What?

BILL: You heard. Pauline. Look I haven't got all day. I need to talk to you about...about the plumbing.

PAULINE: There's nothing wrong with the plumbing.

BILL: Did I say there was something wrong with the plumbing?

PAULINE: No.

BILL: Well there you are then. I just need to talk to you about it.

PAULINE: Talk to me then.

BILL: I'm not talking through this door.

PAULINE: Well come back later then.

BILL: What do you mean come back later? I'm the landlord. You can't tell me to come back later. This is my place.

PAULINE: It's your Mother's house.

BILL: Don't get clever with me. I'm the official landlord. And there's nothing in our agreement that says you can tell me to come back later.

PAULINE: I pay my rent. I have rights. You can't just barge your way in. This may be your house but it's also my home.

BILL: I'm barging my way in am I? And you're a lawyer now are you? Is that it? You been to the library again haven't you? Listen. When you feel the need to talk to me about rights don't forget I gave you a roof over your head when many wouldn't have. You owe me.

PAULINE: I pay rent. I don't owe anything?

BILL: You know perfectly well what I mean Pauline. There aren't many around like me who'd be willing to take on people like you...not in their own homes. I've put myself at risk here you do understand and appreciate that don't you? Well do you? You know sometimes I'm too kind for my own good.

PAULINE: I don't know what you are talking about.

BILL: You forget to take your medication and who knows what could happen. I'm taking a big risk here.

PAULINE: It's not like that.

BILL: Says you. I read the papers. Every day there's something about people like you.

PAULINE: People like me?

BILL: You want me to go into details?

PAULINE: No. Can you come back in an hour?

BILL: What? An hour? What do you think my name is? I got things to do. My mother needs her dinner and then you can bet your bottom dollar she'll want me to give her a bath. I have commitments you know. A diary full of 'em. I can't just change my plans on a whim just because one of my lodgers wants me to come back in an hour. Some of us don't have that freedom. I don't know...who the hell do you think you are? I already do enough for you. Come back in an hour....honestly.

PAULINE: I'm sorry? What have you ever done for me?

BILL: The washing.

PAULINE: What?

BILL: Who do you think got your washing off the line for you when the storm broke eh? It would still be out there soaking wet if it wasn't for me.

**We hear a distant phone ringing.**

BILL: Hear that? That's how busy I am. Probably someone wanting a room. And they could be lucky...don't you think? Mmm? Might have a spare room very soon. Right. Don't go out. I'll be back.

**BILL EXITS...**

PAULINE: What about my washing? I want my washing.



**A moment...the distant phone stops ringing.**

**PAULINE sits for a moment. She takes a deep breath... and resumes her exercise in silence.**

**A moment...she stops peddling.**

PAULINE: You know it's a funny thing. But if the voices do stop...I think I might miss them. I know that they're not friends or anything like that but they have been part of my life for a very long time. Mind you, I shan't miss people looking at me when I'm having a conversation with my voices. That was always embarrassing. No...it will take some getting used to but I will be really glad if we can silence them forever. Anyway fingers-

**BILL bangs the door. He's clutching a newspaper. He interrupts her.**

BILL: See this is what I mean. **(Reads from the newspaper)** 'Police tazered a man today at Bingo's nightclub after he approached them shouting *'Last orders ladies and Gentlemen. Last orders please'*. Apparently the man who remains unidentified was dressed in a dinner jacket and bow tie and had been posing as a staff member at, at least five drinking establishments demanding that customers *'Drink up'* and then collecting their glasses, empty or otherwise'. Now that's what I mean.

PAULINE: What has that got to do with me?

BILL: I'm trying to point out to you the risk that I'm taking.

PAULINE: What are you talking about?

BILL: Unreasonable behaviour. I'm talking about the fact that people like you are known to have uncontrollable urges and prone to unpredictable actions.

PAULINE: Uncontrollable urges? People like me? Unpredictable actions?

- PAULINE: What does all that mean?
- BILL: Don't make me go into details Pauline. I'm just saying that I'm taking risks having people like you around. You know you're lucky having this place, so stop messing me around. There's a lot of people I know who told me I was daft taking you on, a lot of people who told me it would be better for me if you were locked up.
- PAULINE: Locked up?
- BILL: In a home. Where you could be watched.
- PAULINE: This is my home and I can look after myself thank you very much. I don't need to be watched.
- BILL: *'A danger to yourself and others'*... I believe the phrase is.
- PAULINE: You shouldn't be talking to me like this. I pay my rent. You should leave me alone. And where's my washing?
- BILL: Yeah. **(Laughs)** You pay your bloody rent all right – when you bloody like. I've decided I want the rent on Fridays...like we agreed...otherwise...
- PAULINE: I've got your money and I've always paid you on a Friday. I just need to get it from the bank.
- BILL: Well you'd better get a move on...otherwise...
- PAULINE: Otherwise?
- BILL: Otherwise I go to see the people who got you this place...my place. They gave me all sorts of assurances. Said you were trustworthy and reliable...seems they were mistaken.

**A pause.**

PAULINE:           Where's my washing?

BILL:                Drying. And then I'm going to fold it for you.

PAULINE:           I don't want you to fold it for me thank you very much.

BILL:                I will bring you your washing when you have my rent...and it will be folded. I like to do a job properly, me.

**Pause.****We hear distant banging.**

PAULINE:           I don't want to talk anymore. I've just got in from work. I'm tired. I need to have a rest and then I'll go to the bank. I'll get your money don't worry about that.

**The distant banging continues...BILL directs his remarks at the noise.**

BILL:                All right...all right for God's sake Mother, I'm coming, I'm coming.

PAULINE:           I'll go to the bank and drop it in to your flat on the way back.

BILL:                Just make sure you do Pauline. **(Pause)** Have you taken your pills?

PAULINE:           What?

BILL:                You heard. Have you taken your pills? The big pink ones are the most important. They're on your table in that white box. You should never ever forget to take them...especially the big pink ones. If you're going out...take your pills.

PAULINE: How do you know about my pills?

BILL: Never mind that. Just remember to take them.

PAULINE: Have you been in my room?

BILL: Why would I want to go in your room?

PAULINE: You've got a key.

BILL: That's for emergencies.

PAULINE: What emergencies?

BILL: You know...in case you take an overdose or something like that.

PAULINE: **(Upset & Angry)** How dare you. If you've been in my room I'm going to report you.

BILL: Really? You're going to report me are you? And who would that be too eh?

**More distant banging.**

**BILL:** I'm coming Mother, I'm coming.

**BILL laughs and EXITS towards the distant banging.**

**PAULINE sits and weeps.**

PAULINE: How does he know what pills I take? He shouldn't know what pills I take. It's private. It's my business not his, mine.

**She wipes her eyes with a sleeve, reaches across to the table...**

**...and turns on her ancient cassette.**

**Bob Marley continues where he left off...and so does PAULINE (she sings).**

**A moment...BILL'S at the door again. He bangs the door.**

*Thump, thump, thump.*

**Alarmed, PAULINE presses the pause button. Silence.**

BILL:                    Oh I nearly forgot. **(Pause)** Happy birthday.

**BLACKOUT. END SCENE I.**

**LIGHTS UP SCENE II.**

**PAULINE sits at the table eating a bowl of cornflakes. A single candle glows embedded in a small chocolate birthday cake.**

PAULINE: You know I asked to be moved today. You were right. It was too much too soon. Perhaps not such a good idea to be thrown in the deep end like that.

All those different faces. Queuing up. Waiting. Waiting for me. I thought about trying what Doctor Ross suggested...you know...imagine I was somewhere else... somewhere where I really wanted to be....but you can't can you? I mean be fair it's not realistic is it. Not in that situation. There'd be chaos. It's all very well for Doctor Ross to suggest something like that but I bet he's never even been in a supermarket let alone worked in one. Probably has someone to do his shopping for him. A little man in a van. The same little man who does all his odd jobs no doubt. How the other half live. Wish I could afford a little man. Someone to do all the jobs that Bill conveniently forgets to do. Anyway where was I? Oh yes. You have to concentrate in a job like I've got don't you? You have to keep your wits about you. Can you imagine me sat there with a big smile on my face enjoying the imaginary sunshine in an imaginary Barbados? No me neither.

Not with twenty impatient customers waiting in a line to have their cornflakes checked out. **(Laughs)**. I may be mad but I'm not that mad. Anyway today I took it all on board took a step back as advised, and made a sensible, tough but necessary decision. For the first time ever I actually recognised the danger signs. I looked ahead. I looked ahead and realised that if I didn't take responsibility there would be...well...I don't have to paint a picture do I? *Melt-down*. The truth is, I couldn't cope. The panic attacks were bubbling up just under the surface. I could feel them. *Hubble, bubble, toil and trouble*. It is not a good sign wanting to empty the bowels every five minutes is it? And it's an even worse sign when you start not particularly caring where you do the emptying.

PAULINE: The last thing the customers or the boss wants is a disturbed woman on the till exhibiting signs of madness. How would you feel if all you wanted to do was pay for your shopping but the sweaty, shaking, mad woman on the till, who's dying for the loo and just about to have a major turn, wouldn't let you? You wouldn't shop there again would you?

Anyhow you call me what you like but I think I did very well. I recognised the signs and that's something I wouldn't have done a few months ago. I'd have had the screaming hab-dabs fallen on the floor, wet myself and lost yet another job. So, all in all and taking everything into consideration...I'm feeling quite pleased with myself. Which must mean that things – *things meaning me* - are improving.

So...to cut a long and rather embarrassing story short, I asked the supervisor if I could go back to shelf stacking. And you know what?

I actually think she was disappointed. Yeah. She said I'd been doing so well...it was a shame that I wanted to move back.

Which means...I'd made an impression. The fact that it was two steps forward – one back isn't so important, I had made an impression. *And*. Like Doctor Ross said...you have to give these things time.

**BILL appears in the corridor...except it's obviously not BILL.**

**(Same Actor different character).**

**Dressed in a light coloured suit (DMITRI) taps gently on PAULINE'S door. He speaks with an Italian accent.**

DMITRI: Pauline...it's me Dmitri.

PAULINE: Dmitri?

DMITRI: Dmitri your Guardian Angel.

PAULINE: No. I don't have a Guardian Angel. Not anymore.

DMITRI: (Sighs) Yes you do. You know you do. We're old friends. Don't deny it.

**Pause.**

PAULINE: I thought you had gone.

DMITRI: Obviously not. It's not that easy you know, a pill here and a pill there is not going to make a difference especially when me and you are almost joined at the hip. Now. You know why I'm here so why act so surprised? I thought you might be glad to hear from me. It's been a while.

PAULINE: I thought I was free of you. I thought the treatment had worked.

DMITRI: Now that I don't understand. In fact I'm hurt. Why on earth would you want to be free of me? I thought we were friends. We go back a long way. You have upset me. You have made me sad...really, really sad. If I could, I would cry.

PAULINE: What do you want?

DMITRI: Why are you talking to me like that? (Sighs) Why are you asking such questions? You know perfectly well what I want. What I've always wanted. The best for you. I want you to come with me. How much of the phrase 'Guardian Angel' do you not understand?

PAULINE: I am not going anywhere with you. I've told you before. I intend to see this through.

DMITRI: (Smallish temper tantrum) *'This'?* *'This'?* *You do not even understand what 'this' is Pauline.* Look...Pauline...I want to help you find peace Pauline. I'm a Guardian Angel, that is what we do. You have to let me do my job.



PAULINE: I'm doing well now. I don't need you anymore.

DMITRI: You think that because I'm harder to hear you're doing well? Is that it?

PAULINE: Yes.

DMITRI: Oh dear Pauline. You actually think that the big pink ones are working don't you?

PAULINE: Yes. Yes I do. And I won't let anyone, especially you, tell me any different.

DMITRI: Then you must suit yourself. But you need to know that all the big pink ones are doing are suppressing your awareness. The big pink ones are not really touching me. The big pink ones are volume control that's all. And now your body's slowly becoming used to them...well they're not working as well. Let me use a more scientific approach Pauline. The big pink ones are just throwing a big wet chemical blanket around your head. Like wearing rubbish head phones. Distortion that's all it is. Cheap headphones. And if you think about it no one in their right mind would want to wear cheap and nasty headphones every day of their lives would they? Sorry to say but that's all the big pink ones are. Volume control...nothing more than that.

PAULINE: So according to you, you who are nothing more than a voice in my head, I'm still not in my right mind?

DMITRI: That is not what I am saying. Quite the opposite. It's the Others.

PAULINE: What do you mean the Others?

DMITRI: It's them. Not you. Them. And that's what I'm talking about. You, do not, belong here. It's them that are crazy-not you.. I mean...how much proof do you want? look at your Landlord. Bill. Mad as a box of frogs.

DMITRI: You want to stay here? With that specimen? Well? Do you? Eh? You should come with me. I will bring you to peace.

PAULINE: Things will change. I don't plan to be here for much longer.

DMITRI: You would be better off not playing their games you know. You are nothing more than a guinea pig...a bit like your friend in the cage over there.

PAULINE: He's a hamster.

DMITRI: Whatever. He still needs nothing but straw and a spinning wheel to amuse him. And when you have nothing but straw and a spinning wheel to amuse you – you go mad. Simple. You stay here...and well need I say more?

PAULINE: Yes. Say more. Explain yourself.

DMITRI: **(Sighs)** I'm saying dear Pauline that if you stay here for much longer you will end up like them. You are better off coming with me. Listen. I've told you before. We could finish this in a jot. In a moment. A moment of pain is all it would take. A flicker of hurt. All over. Gone in a flash. And before you could say big pink ones, you will be in a much better place than this over-rated shit hole. I could take you to a place where you would be happy. Where you could do what you like. You wouldn't even have to hear from me if you didn't want to, although I have to say because we are close friends, I would be more than a little disappointed if you were to choose that path. Anyway, I'd appreciate it if you could make your mind up soon as possible because this is all getting a little tiresome.

PAULINE: I'm not going anywhere with you Dmitri. I'm getting better. I know it. Soon, soon you will be gone and then I shall know peace. Then I will be able to do what I want.

- DMITRI: If that is the case then why have you been calling out to me?
- PAULINE: I have not been calling out to you.
- DMITRI: Every night. **(Whinny voice)** *'Help me...please help me. I need your help....please. Please grant me some peace.*
- PAULINE: **(Shocked)** *Those are my prayers. How dare you. What are you doing in my prayers? Prayers are private. Prayers are between me and my God. You have no right to listen in on my private prayers.*
- DMITRI: That's where you are wrong Pauline. I have every right. I am part of you. Don't you understand that yet? Haven't you worked it out? I'm in you.
- PAULINE: But I wasn't talking to you. They were my personal prayers...they were for someone else, not for you. They were for God.
- DMITRI: You people. **(Sighs)** No such thing as God. Listen. Everything you do or say, flows through me. I hear...everything. And I'll tell you something else shall I? And this may surprise you. **(Pause)** It is not easy for me either. This constant battle. This too-ing and fro-ing. This trying to make you accept me. To make you trust me. To make you...love me.
- PAULINE: To make me love you? How am I supposed to love a voice in my head.
- DMITRI: You hurt me talking like that. Not being wanted hurts very much and you of all people should know this better than anybody. I try my best to ignore it , but it still hurts. If only you could see me as more than a voice in your head. I am your friend. **(Pause)** Anyway. Are you coming or not? It's time. You cannot keep this pretence up for much longer. I don't know who you think you are...

PAULINE: Please. I would prefer it if you left me alone. Go away. Please go away.

DMITRI: I'll never go away Pauline you know that. Not as long as you need me...and I know you need me. You can do all you like to soften my voice but I'm always there. Waiting. And my way is the way you should go. My way is the best thing for you Pauline, I think you know that really. We both know you're broken and we both know only I can put you together again. Be sensible. You are coming to the limit of your patience...and your strength.

PAULINE: Go away.

DMITRI: **(Sighs)** Very well. I have to do as you ask...for now. But there will be a time believe me, a moment when you know that I am right. When you know that everything that I have been telling you is right. And one more thing. Do not let it be said that I do not have your best interest at heart. I want only the best for you. And the best is to rest that troubled mind. **(Pause)** Anyway. I'll see and more than likely hear from you soon. Goodbye for now...and take care my Pauline...take care.

**Thunder.**

**DMITRI turns on his heel and EXITS.**

**LIGHTS DOWN. END SCENE II.**

**LIGHTS UP. SCENE III.****PAULINE sits at the table staring into space.****ENTER a smartly dressed man (DOCTOR ROSS- but same actor) he carries a briefcase.****He knocks on the door.**

PAULINE: (Jolts) Who is it?

DOCTOR ROSS: It's Doctor Ross. I came as soon as I got your message.

PAULINE: What message? I never left you a message.

DOCTOR ROSS: On my answering machine. You said you were needing my help. I'm sorry I wasn't in the office I was doing my rounds. I came as quickly as I could. So? How can I help Pauline? You need to talk? Tell me?

PAULINE: I didn't ring. It wasn't me. I'm fine. Honestly. I feel fine. But it wasn't me.

**DOCTOR ROSS looks concerned.**

DOCTOR ROSS: OK Pauline don't worry I believe you. Let's not worry about it for the moment. Listen...I've got my mobile on me now. You have that number too. So if you need me ring me on my mobile. Don't ring the office. I might miss it again if you ring the office. All right? (Pause) So then? You want me to leave you to get on with things? Or should we go over what's bothering you?

PAULINE: There's nothing bothering me Doctor Ross. Nothing at all.

DOCTOR ROSS: OK. That's fine. Don't worry and don't forget ring if you need me. But on my mobile. Not the office.

DOCTOR ROSS:                   If there's nothing else I'll be off then. Sorry to have bothered you. Bye Pauline.

**Thunder as DOCTOR ROSS turns to leave.**

PAULINE:                        **(Urgently)** No. Wait. There is something. Please wait.

**DOCTOR ROSS stops in his tracks and turns back.**

DOCTOR ROSS:                I'm still here. You want I should come in Pauline? **(Pause)**. If you want me to stay out here that's fine as well. Whatever you want. It's your room. Your space. Either way doesn't bother me. **(Pause)**...Pauline?

**Pause.**

PAULINE:                        Would you mind if I asked you to stay outside. I'm not dressed.

DOCTOR ROSS:                Like I said. Fine by me. So? How can I help?

**Pause.**

PAULINE:                        I haven't done too badly have I Doctor Ross? I mean in the space of – what - six weeks?

DOCTOR ROSS:                More like two months Pauline. You've done very well. I've been watching your progress very carefully and I can tell you that I'm very, very pleased.

PAULINE:                        Really? Two months? That long?

DOCTOR ROSS:                In the last two months you've got yourself discharged...got yourself a job and got yourself somewhere to live. That's excellent Pauline, excellent. I can tell you that not many of my patients manage all that...

DOCTOR ROSS: ... and certainly not in the space of two months. Very well done young lady. Very well done indeed.

PAULINE: And I did it all off my own back?

DOCTOR ROSS: You most certainly did. All off your own back Pauline. You should be very proud of yourself.

PAULINE: Do you think it's possible Doctor Ross...that this feeling I'm feeling...do you think...

DOCTOR ROSS: Go on...

PAULINE: Do you think that it could be what they call...happy? Do you think so Doctor Ross? Do you think I'm happy?

DOCTOR ROSS: What can I say Pauline? It's your feeling. Whatever it is you must own it and if it's making you feel good... then I guess...I guess that, there's a good chance it could be happy. It's wonderful and I'm so pleased for you.

PAULINE: I couldn't have done it without you Doctor Ross.

DOCTOR ROSS: You put all the effort in. I just made suggestions. Are you doing all the things we spoke about? The stuff I showed you? The techniques that we went over? The imagination work you initially laughed at?

PAULINE: I know. And I'm sorry. I use the imagination thing frequently. I think it works. Whenever it all gets a little too much...I try to be somewhere else. In my head. Somewhere warm and safe. Somewhere where the sun shines. Somewhere where people are nice to me.

DOCTOR ROSS: Good. That's good. But always remember Pauline that that's a temporary thing. You remember I said you always have to come back? You can't stay in that sunny place for ever because it's in your head. In real life...as we both know...it rains. But that's OK. What I've shown you is just a technique. It allows you a respite. A temporary respite. It's not real. It's just a trick to give you a break. Somewhere to go to help you catch your breath. A room in your head that takes you out of yourself for a short while. Somewhere to become strong again so you can face the real world.

PAULINE: I don't like the real world very much Doctor Ross.

DOCTOR ROSS: I'm not sure any of us are that enamoured with it Pauline but it's where we are...where we live. The skill is making it work for us. And one of the first lessons we have to learn right from the beginning is actually not to cut ourselves off from it. We have to stand up and face it. The light and the dark. The sunshine and the showers. And perhaps most importantly of all we must try to join in...become part of that reality because we are valuable cogs in a mighty wheel. We join in and...can you remember what I said about joining in?

PAULINE: We join in by leaving our mark.

DOCTOR ROSS: Good. Very good. And each of our marks are different. What I give to the real world is different from what you give. And why's that Pauline?

PAULINE: Because...because...

DOCTOR ROSS: Because...?

PAULINE: Because I'm special. We're all special.



DOCTOR ROSS: Correct. And you most certainly are Pauline. You my dear sweet Pauline are unique. It's a fact that there is no one in the whole wide world who is exactly like you. No one. You are a one off. Just as I am. When they made you Pauline, when they made me, they broke the mould. They can't make another Pauline. And they can't make another Doctor Ross. It's impossible. **(Pause)** Now...have you been taking your medication? First thing in the morning? And one at night? The big pink ones. They're in that white box I left with you.

**PAULINE looks guiltily at the large white box on the table.**

DOCTOR ROSS: I know you don't like taking the pills but they will help. I want you to keep taking them for now.

PAULINE: They make me feel funny Doctor Ross.

DOCTOR ROSS: A few weeks more Pauline. Just to keep things quiet...you know what I mean. And then I want you to think about that other treatment I told you about. You remember? The new treatment me and my friend are developing. I think when we've completed our tests and you're ready to become part of it well I think you'll find it could change things. Dramatically. The small group we've already treated have come out the other end...like new. Like, totally different people. Like butterflies out of a chrysalis. In my business we don't like to use the word cured but I'll tell you I certainly don't recognise them from what they were before. I'm not a religious man so when someone like me uses the term miraculous...you can believe that they mean it. It's true. I have never seen anything like it. Even their own families didn't recognise them. All their symptoms have vanished. Everything has gone. They're clean Pauline, clean.

PAULINE: The voices?

DOCTOR ROSS: Gone. The voices have disappeared completely. You wouldn't know they were patients of mine just a few weeks ago. **(Pause)** What do you think Pauline? Would you like to give it a try when we're ready?

**Pause...PAULINE worries...**

DOCTOR ROSS: Pauline?

PAULINE: I need to think about it Doctor Ross.

DOCTOR ROSS: That's fine by me Pauline. In fact I wouldn't want it any other way. I know what you're thinking Pauline and I get it. I understand totally. It's the use of electricity isn't it? I do understand Pauline, I really do. But this is different. There's no pain. No discomfort. Nothing. We've come a long way from ETC if that's what you're worried about. There are no wires. No electrodes attached to any part of your body. It's all in the air. In the very air that you breath. And it all takes place in a special comfort room. You actually sit in an armchair while me and my colleague work our magic and before you know it...you're a new person. You fall asleep and when you awake well...you're different. Still you but without the flaws. Your own person. You are...how can I put this...reborn. Yes...I like that...reborn.

**A flash of lightning followed by a huge roll of thunder.**

DOCTOR ROSS: Look Pauline **(looking at watch)** I'm going to get off now. There's a couple of people I need to check up on. I want you to think about what I've said carefully and let me know your decision. But. And I have to say this.

DOCTOR ROSS: Don't be too long about it. When our paper is published in a few days time and word gets out you can guarantee people will be queuing up. Mark my words young lady in a matter of weeks there will be a very long waiting list. **(Pause)** Right. You have my number. If you need me, ring. Mobile. Not office. Oh and one other thing, my colleague would like to visit you. Is that OK? He'll give you a little more information about the treatment and hopefully put your mind at rest if you have any questions. Is that all right with you? No pressure. If you don't want Doctor Dmitri to call you just let me know.

**A pause as PAULINE sits up in shock and in silence on hearing the name 'DMITRI'.**

DOCTOR ROSS: It would be purely a friendly visit to explain a few basics. No pressure...none at all. And it's all up to you. So? Would you mind if Doctor Dmitri called? He's a good man and I think you and he would get on like a house on fire. What do you say Pauline? **(Pause)**. Pauline? Hello Pauline?

**PAULINE sits shocked and staring into space.**

DOCTOR ROSS: Pauline. **(Pause)**. All right. I'll leave it up to you. Just let me know. Bye-bye for now. Don't forget to ring on my mobile if you need me OK? **(Pause)**. OK. Bye then. I'll be seeing you.

**DOCTOR ROSS turns and exits the corridor while PAULINE sits staring into space.**

**LIGHTS DOWN. END SCENE III.**

**LIGHTS UP. SCENE IV.**

**PAULINE dances to Bob Marley. She seems happy. A moment, she turns the music down, picks up the 'Hamster treats' and talks to her hamster.**

PAULINE: Sweetie time. Come on...come on don't be fussy. I'm assured that these are full of hamster goodness. No artificial additives. All natural ingredients. Let me see...(reads the back of the packet) Raisins. Corn. God, I could have this for breakfast. Tomatoes. Fruit fragments mixed with lentils and a soft gentle drizzle of-

**BILL'S at the door.**

BILL: You've been lying to me.

PAULINE: I've been to the bank. I was just going to bring the money down.

BILL: No not that. You had a pet in your room all the time you was telling me you didn't. I knew I could smell something. All this time you've been lying to me. All this time you have had a pet. All this time you have been breaking my rules. You madam are a liar and worse than that you thought to make a fool of me.

PAULINE: I'm not a liar. You said when you interviewed me, no cats or dogs.

BILL: I said no pets.

PAULINE: You said no cats or dogs I remember it clearly.

BILL: You can't help yourself can you? Even now you have to lie. Even now you try to wriggle your way out of it.

BILL: You're disgusting.

PAULINE: I am not lying. You said no cats or-

BILL: **(Cutting in)** I've been looking through the bins and guess what I found eh?

PAULINE: I don't know.

BILL: I think you do. I found hamster food. Bags of the filthy stuff. Bags of it. Straw...I found straw and worst of all...go on guess...tell me what else I found eh?

PAULINE: I don't know what you're talking about.

BILL: **(Shouts)** Hamster shit. Piles and piles of hamster shit.

PAULINE: Not true...that's not true.

BILL: You have been keeping a hamster in your room against all the rules. Now you must face the consequences.

PAULINE: I don't...I don't have a hamster in my room.

BILL: Calm down Pauline...calm down. I believe you.

PAULINE: *What?*

BILL: You most certainly do not have a hamster in your room. You did. But now...you don't..

PAULINE: **(Quietly)** What?

**BILL:** I said...I said as of this moment you do not have a hamster in your room.

**PAULINE is alarmed. She plunges her hand into the cage in an effort to find her hamster.**

**PAULINE:** **(Weeping)** *No. No. No. No.*

**The sounds of the storm outside increase in volume as PAULINE goes into total panic mode...screaming and shouting she opens the cage door and rips its contents apart in a wild search for her pet.**

**She scatters the wood shavings, the water bowl, everything in the bowl across the floor of her flat, while outside the room we hear BILL laughing.**

**A lull in the storm...**

**BILL:** Any sign of him Pauline? You don't think he's escaped do you? I mean he could be in the pipe work, anywhere. You know what these old houses are like, full of nooks and crannies.

**PAULINE:** **(Screaming)** *What have you done with him...where is he...where is he? Tell me where he is?*

**BILL:** What I will tell you is you are wasting your time looking in the cage. You won't find your little friend in his usual place. Not anymore you won't.

**PAULINE:** **(Screaming and crying)** *Where is he you bastard...where is he? What have you done with him?*

**BILL:** Should I give you a clue? Eh? Would that help? All right. Clue number one is to be found where food is prepared.

**PAULINE stops her wild activity thinks for a moment and heads towards the kitchen.**

**BILL:** (Sing-song) Are you heading towards the kitchen? Good. 'Cause that way you're getting warmer...and here's another clue...so is your little friend, he's getting warmer too. In fact...in fact he should be done by now. Nice and crisp I should think...nice and crisp.

**PAULINE understands immediately and rushes offstage screaming to the (unseen) kitchen.**

**A pause...and we hear a scream and her sobbing bitterly.**

**BILL:** (Laughing) Done to your satisfaction madam is he? It was well done you asked for wasn't it? Any complaints madam? If you could put them in writing and address them to the landlord it would be most appreciated. Thank you very much Madam... enjoy your meal.

**BILL EXITS laughing. Just as PAULINE RE-ENTERS distraught and her hands blackened by soot.**

**LIGHTS DOWN. END SCENE IV.**

**LIGHTS UP. SCENE V.**

**Heavy rain beats on the roof.**

**A distressed PAULINE sits on the floor amongst the debris of her hamster's cage, silently weeping.**

**The door to her room opens slowly...**

**ENTER DMITRI.**

**He walks to the table and picks up the white box of pink pills.**

DMITRI: Pauline, it's Dmitri. I think maybe you should take these. They'd help I'm sure. Calm you down.

**PAULINE looks up at DMITRI.**

PAULINE: I didn't hear you knock.

DMITRI: I didn't. I thought that I should come straight in. You looked like you needed my help.

PAULINE: You don't come through my door unless you're invited. I don't care who you are. I don't have much but what I do have I guard. You have to understand...I have never really had anything I could call my own until now. So when you want to make use of what is mine...you need my permission...you have to ask. **(Pause)** I don't remember giving you my permission. You are taking a liberty...and that makes me very unhappy.

DMITRI: Please Pauline...forgive me but I was worried. Please. Take a pill? Make you feel whole again.

PAULINE: Why should I want to take a pill?

DMITRI: Doctor Ross would want you to take a pill. He's like me.



DMITRI: He and me...we only wants the best for you. Would you like me to fetch a glass of water? I'll get you a glass of water.

**As DMITRI EXITS into the (unseen) kitchen PAULINE looks toward him.**

PAULINE: Why is the world so cruel Dmitri? Why is it so full of pain? What drives people to do the wicked things that they do? What do they get from such acts? Pleasure? Why would anyone want to hurt my friend just for pleasure?

**ENTER DMITRI with a glass in one hand.**

**He places the glass on the table and opens the white box. He pours its contents, (pink pills) onto the table.**

**He picks up a handful of the pills and the glass of water and walks towards PAULINE. He hands her the glass of water and a pill.**

DMITRI: Here. Take this. Make you feel better.

**A roll of thunder rents the air as PAULINE takes the pill and drinks the water.**

PAULINE: I don't understand what makes people behave so badly. Do you Dmitri...do you know?

DMITRI: I told you. They're all mad.

PAULINE: That's not good enough an explanation and you know it.

DMITRI: **(Handing her another pill which she takes)** Well, in all my years of observing I have found that their behaviour is usually triggered by wanting something that they can't have. It's like jealousy. Like a mad frustration.

PAULINE: I still don't understand.

**DMITRI hands her another pill which she swallows.**

DMITRI: Well, take Bill for instance. It's obvious what he wanted.

PAULINE: Really? What?

DMITRI: **(Smiles)** You really don't know do you?

PAULINE: No. Tell me.

DMITRI: You. He wanted you. I can't believe you didn't realise that. Here. **(Hands her yet another pill).**

PAULINE: **(Takes the pill and drinks the water)** What on earth did he want from me?

DMITRI: Oh Pauline. Poor innocent Pauline. **(Sighs)** Anyway, how are you feeling?

PAULINE: Sleepy...very sleepy.

DMITRI: Good. It's important that you don't resist it. You must rest. You need to rest. Just one more...and then we can go.

**DMITRI hands her another pill which she takes with a swallow of water.**

PAULINE: I don't think I will ever understand. **(Pause)** Can I have another glass of water please?

DMITRI: Of course.

**DMITRI EXITS off into the kitchen with the empty glass.**

