

Landlady There's already two empty mementos behind this bar.

Landlord (*turning to serve someone*) Two pints sir. One lager, one bitter.

Landlady (*behind him, penetratingly*) Don't you think it funny though someone should ask . . . Don't you?

Landlord (*puts glass under lager tap*) Lager.

Landlady Don't you? Don't you?

Landlord (*worn down, puts glass under bitter tap*) Sorry, bitter's off. I'll just go and see to that. (*Goes quickly.*)

Landlady *lifts glass of lager, gives to customer. Tries bitter tap.*

Laughs.

Landlady He was wrong again. I thought as much. Look at that. Bitter's never off here dear. (*Filling glass. Looking after Landlord.*) Never.

Interval - if required.

Landlord *enters collecting glasses.*

Landlord Busy now, eh? You can see it busy now, eh? The hectic hour. There's been a lot of copping offs round that side, two fallings out here, and a fight, three proposals of marriage round there, and a birth in the snug. And it's nowhere near last orders yet! Not really. Not really. I always say that about this time. I like a crack with the customers now and again. Better than a crack from them, eh? Eh? So you're still here then. Glad to see it. Keep drinking that's my motto, don't stop till you drop, that's my other. Glass harvesting time now. Collect 'em in.

Collect 'em in, wish they'd bring their own. Come on, sip, swig, and sup (*Under breath.*) ya buggers. That's right. All right if I take your glasses love. Not the ones you're wearing. No put them back. (*Turns to audience.*) Bloody hell.

Landlord *crosses to woman, Lesley, sitting on her own.*

Landlord Hello love, where is he tonight then?

Lesley *mumbles something.*

Landlord Hey?

Lesley *mumbles again.*

Landlord At bar?

Lesley Yeah.

Landlord (*looks round*) Looks like you've lost him then. You'll never find him again in all that lot. Look at 'em all. Lovely thirsty boozers. My favourites. Better get her back and serving. (*Looks off.*) Look at her entertaining the rabble.

Landlord *goes.*

Lesley *looks around, then looks down. Looks around, then looks down.*

Roy *comes over with drinks.*

Roy What were he on about?

Lesley Nowt, he were just collecting glasses.

Roy Oh. Here you are. (*Puts drinks down. Sits.*) She's a character that landlady.

Lesley She is.

They drink. Pause.

Lesley What you on?

Roy Mild.

She nods. They sit in silence.

Roy There's more strange things happen in a pub than there do on T.V. Eh?

Lesley Aye. Could I just . . . ?

Roy Bloody hell, what did your last slave die of? Bloody Hell! I've only just sat down.

Lesley No. I wanted to know if I could go to loo.

Roy 'Course you can. Okay go.

She stands up.

But don't be long.

She begins to move.

Hey, and look down.

Lesley Eh?

Roy Keep your eyes down. Every time you look up, you look at men you.

Lesley I don't.

Roy (*pointing at her*) Eh, hey, no back chat. (*Looks quickly around, making sure no one's heard him.*) Go on.

She goes.

Roy (*to someone*) Mike.

Pause.

(*To someone else.*) Sandy.

Pause.

She comes back and sits.

Roy What did you have?

Lesley Eh?

Roy What did you have, one or two?

Lesley One.

Roy You were a long time for a one.

Lesley There was someone in as well.

Roy Christ, I s'pose you got chatting.

Lesley No.

Roy No.

Lesley No.

Roy Don't 'no' me.

She edges back.

Did you say 'owt about me?

Lesley No.

Roy Who did you talk about then, someone else?

Lesley No.

Roy I told you with your no's. Who did you talk about?

Lesley We didn't even talk.

Roy Didn't even talk. Don't gi' me that. Two women in a woman's shithouse and they don't speak. You must think I'm soft. Do you?

Lesley What?

Roy Think I'm soft.

Lesley I don't know.

Roy What do you mean, don't know?

Lesley Well, I can't say no you said.

Roy Oh, if I said put your hand in the fire would you? Would you?

She shakes her head.

Roy Why not?

She looks away.

Roy No but you can talk about men in women's toilets can't you love, eh?

She keeps looking away.

If you don't answer, that means yes.

Lesley No.

Roy If you say no, two things happen: one I know you're lying, two I think about hittin' you in the face.

Lesley looks down. He nods to someone across bar.

Roy So, do you wanna stay here or move on?

Lesley Mmm.

Roy Christ I don't know why I bother. You've no conversation have you? Have you?

Lesley Mmm.

Roy See what I'm on about. I might as well go out with a piece of shit from that favourite woman's bog of yours, where you spent all our night.

Pause.

Do you want some more crisps?

Lesley Mmm.

Roy Well liven up then and you might get some later on.

What about some 'Wotsits'?

Lesley Yes.

Roy Well there you are then. Liven up and you might get some 'Wotsits'.

Pause.

Roy They've done a nice job in here 'ant they, eh? He did

a lot of it himself, knocked the snug out and everything. What's over there?

Lesley Eh?

Roy What's over there so interesting?

Lesley Nothing, I just moved me head I . . .

Roy I see. Watching the darts were you? Eh?

Lesley No I . . .

Roy What?

Lesley I don't know.

Roy Don't know. I do. See that little git in the jeans and shirt, there, him.

She looks.

Roy Okay you've seen enough now. Well I could break him like that, with my knee and my arms. Break the little wanker like that. Okay? Okay?

Lesley Okay.

Roy Would you be sad?

Lesley I don't know. I don't even know him.

Roy But you'd like to wouldn't you?

Lesley No.

Roy No. Are you sure?

She nods her head.

Roy It's just that 'okay' sounded a bit sad.

Lesley What 'okay'?

Roy That 'okay' you said before sounded a bit sad. After I'd said I'd break the little wanker. That one.

Lesley (*confused*) Oh.

Roy *stares at her a long time.*

Roy Don't make me feel small.

Lesley I'm not.

Roy I'm not having you or him or anyone making me feel small.

Lesley I'm not.

Roy Well, I just said all that then, and then felt small.

Lesley What?

Roy About him and you, and that 'okay', and you made me feel small after. When it was your fault, I said it in the first place, for looking at him.

Lesley (*beaten*) Oh.

Roy Well.

Lesley What?

Roy Are you not going to say sorry?

Lesley Sorry.

Roy Right. (*To someone across bar, raises his glass.*) Aye get 'em down yeah. Ha.

Silence.

Roy You've gone quiet. What you thinking of?

Lesley Nothing.

Roy No, no. Hold on. No. Who you thinking of?

Lesley (*pleading*) Oh Roy.

Roy No, no. When someone's quiet they're thinking, right?

Lesley Maybe.

Roy Maybe. That's a funny word to say, maybe. What you saying maybe for? That means you were. Who?

Lesley I wasn't.

Roy Who? If you wasn't, you would have said no. Who were you thinking of?

Lesley No one.

Roy Who? (*Waits.*) Who?

She shakes her head.

Roy Hey, remember what I said about no. Who?

She looks down.

Who?

She looks down more.

Who?

Lesley (*suddenly jumps up*) No one. No one at all. Can't I even have me own mind!

Roy (*embarrassed*) Sit down. Sit down.

Lesley I can't win. If I said I was thinking of every man in here naked, or I said I was thinking of you and the baby, it wouldn't make any difference. You'd still find a way of torturing me wouldn't you? Torturing! Torturing! *She storms out.*

He looks round grinning, embarrassed.

Pause.

She comes back in.

Lesley I need the front door key.

Roy (*gently*) Hey, sit down love. Please sit.

She still stands.

I'm sorry. I realise what I must have done to you now. I don't know what it is. It's 'cause I care like. You know. I get carried away. Come on, sit down, please.

She does.

(Soft.) I didn't expect you to do that love.

Suddenly slaps her.

(Vicious.) You'll never do it again.

Instant blackout.

Landlord going behind bar.

Landlord Winding down now, winding down. We're over the top of the hill and half way down the other side. In other words the mad rush is over. So . . . (*Reaches for a glass, puts it under optics.*) Should I? Shouldn't I? Should I? Shouldn't I? Or . . . (*Puts glass under pumps.*) Should I? Shouldn't I? Should I? Or . . .

Landlady walks in and goes straight to optics, puts her glass under. Lets measure one, two, three come out. He is watching agape. She goes and lounges against bar.

Landlord What's going on?

Landlady Where?

Landlord Here. With your (*Mimics action.*) one, two, three. We don't do all this for nothing you know.

Landlady Ah, sod off.

Landlord How many have you had tonight anyway?

Landlady Three dray men, five regulars, a few lager louts, and the 'Cheesies' rep.

Landlord It wouldn't surprise me. It would not surprise me.

She lifts her glass in a cheers.

Landlord Come on how much? Let me smell your breath. Let me.

He goes up to her face, she turns away, he sniffs.

Landlady Don't get too close, we might accidentally kiss.

Landlord You're half sozzled, aren't you?

Landlady I'd say more than half actually.

Landlord Bloody great in it. Bloody great.

Landlady Oh shut up.

He suddenly grabs glass off her and throws its contents down the sink. She's angry at first. Then just lounges back. Laughs.

Landlord I'd rather do that, than you have it.

Landlady Oh.

Landlord (*still looking down sink*) Yes, I would.

Landlady Oh I bet it hurt that, like throwing your blood away.

Landlord You just don't care any more do you? It may have escaped your notice, but we're trying to make a living here.

Landlady (*picking up a glass again*) This helps me to keep living here.

She goes toward optics with it. He puts his hand on hers to stop her.

Landlady Get off.

Landlord No.

Landlady Get off or I'll scream like I've been stabbed.

Landlord Do it then.

She begins to open her mouth. He lets her go. She goes to optic, gets another drink.

Landlord I'm going, I can't watch this.

Landlady What, me drinking, or your precious profits on the drip?

Landlord *doesn't look at her. He just leaves.*

She goes to drink. But can't now. Puts it down. Puts her hand over her eyes.

Blackout.

Lights up.

Fred *enters and sits. Alice enters, eating crisps, turns T.V. on, sits beside him.*

Fred Well, shall we get a drink in?

Alice I wouldn't mind so much.

Fred Well, get them in then.

Alice I will after this next programme.

Fred Okay.

Silence. She starts looking round.

Fred What you doing?

Alice I'm just looking round.

Fred You're doing counting things again.

Alice I'm not.

Fred You damn are. Do you want to go back in that white place wid' the closed doors?

Alice No fear, no.

Fred Well hang onto yourself then.

Alice I've never been the same since Elvis died.

Fred You killed him.

Alice How?

Fred By buying his records which gave him money for drugs which killed him.

Alice The King never took drugs.

Fred Not freaky drugs but slimming pills and all that, dried his blood up, constipated him. Choked his bum, he died of a choked bum.

Alice Such kingliness gone.

Fred You're fat and old.

Alice You're exactly the same.

She looks at the T.V.

Alice He's exactly the same as well.

Fred Who?

Alice Him there, behind Kirk Douglas. Very Fat.

Fred He is too. He's not going to get on that palomino horse is he?

Alice No way.

Fred He bloody is you know. You just watch.

They watch.

Alice No, they've both gone out the picture now.

Fred Do you think that's it with them now?

Alice Probably.

Fred I hope the horse comes back towards the end.

Alice It won't.

Fred What a swizz.

Silence.

Fred If I was at home I'd turn the bloody thing off.

Alice I know you would, that's why we came to the pub.

Fred Well it's not to drink that's for sure. I've only had two.

Alice Well you'll have to hang on till we're both ready.

Fred I'm ready now.

Alice Well I nearly am.

Silence.

Fred Well, what we waiting for, the film or the crisps?

Alice All the lot.

She finishes crisps: tips the packet and drains it. While he's not looking, she blows it up and pops it in his ear. They look round and start laughing.

Fred Oh ha, I don't know.

Alice Hee hee.

Fred Ha.

Suddenly points at television screen.

Fred There's the palomino again. Look at him go!

Alice I don't believe it, and the fat man too. They've gone now.

Fred I recognised him then. He was in the background in some other film we watched.

Alice I wonder if we'll see him in something else.

Fred Let's remember him, we'll give him a name.

Alice What?

Fred 'Fat-Fat'.

Alice 'Fat-Fat' what?

Fred 'Fat-Fat Palomino'.

Alice 'Fat-Fat Palomino' our favourite star.

Fred He's probably dead now, these are old pictures.

Alice Aw, I hope not.

Fred Oh, don't have the water works.

Alice I'm not. I'm not that sad about him.

Fred He was a bloody good extra though.

Alice He was.

Fred I wouldn't mind trying that.

Alice You're too fat and old.

Fred He was fat and old.

Alice Yeah, but he was a different fat and old.

Fred What do you mean?

Alice He was American-Ranch-style fat and old.

Fred What's that mean?

Alice There's different fat and olds all over the world.

Fred And what fat and old am I? English fat and old?

Alice No, sad fat, poor old.

Fred Well now I know. Anyway, you're just fat and old. Fat and old all over your little chair.

Alice We're middle-aged anyway.

Fred I know, but we look old with our fat.

They both watch tele awhile. The film ends.

Fred It's finished. Turn the tele off.

Alice Why?

Fred We turned it on.

Alice You do it!

Fred I can't with my legs.

She does. She comes back and sits.

Alice (*sings*) Are you lonesome tonight?

Fred So get them in now.

Alice (*sings*) Do you miss me tonight?

Fred Shall we get them in now?

Alice (*sings*) Are you sorry we drifted apart? (*Goes silent.*)

Fred You've gone again haven't you?

Alice It's me nerves, I can't help it.

Fred Come on, let's go home and play records.

Alice I'll cry.

Fred I'll dabble your tears.

Alice We're close in our way.

Fred Close as we can get with our fat.

Alice We've been unlucky in life but luckyish in love.

Fred Yes.

Alice Will you call me Priscilla tonight?

Fred Yes I will. (*Pause.*) Will you call me Fat-Fat Palomino'?

They leave. Blackout.

Landlord *enters.*

LAST ORDERS NOW. COME ON. COME ON. LAST ORDERS. LAST. LADIES AND GENTS.

Begins collecting glasses.

(*To someone in audience.*) He's had a few too many an't he love? Look at that, eh. You wanna get him home. Do you know the fireman's lift?

Last orders everybody. We've reached the point of no return. Last orders now. Come on slow throats. Last orders at the bar.

(*To someone leaving.*) Goodnight. Take care now.

(*To someone as he collects lots of glasses up.*) Did you drink all them yourself Missus? Bloody hell, you can come again you can.

He stacks them on the bar.

Any more for any more?

Last orders.

Exits.

A Woman enters, slightly drunk.

Woman (*to audience*) Are they still serving? I mustn't leave this corner for the moment. I'm the 'Other Woman', come where she shouldn't to look at my man. My man and his wife. I've not come incognito either. I've come as my bloody self; drinky, smart, a little crumpled, used to being dressed up at the wrong time in the wrong places. In the only car on a car park after dark. In strange houses in the afternoon. At bus stops in last night's make-up. And I'm not having it no, no more Mister. (*She takes out a fag, fumbles with it, drops it.*) I've come here tonight, so he can see us both. Not one in one world and one in another, but both under the same light and choose. (*As in a child's choosing rhyme.*) Ip, dip, ip, dip, ip, dip. You see this is the last time I'm going to love. I haven't got it in me to go again. So it's to be him, or it's to be something else, but not another man. No, no more. Where's that fagarette? Did I drop it? Toots to it, toots to the lot of it. Did he look then? (*She tugs at her scarf, it falls.*) He did, I'm sure. Oh Jesu! Jesu! I want him. I want to wave and scream. She

doesn't know, you know. I can tell, see, see that laugh she makes, too free by far. I think. That's how it is in flick and shadow land, it's all thinking of others and their movements and I am sick to the soul with it. What will he do? What will she say? Will he come? Will he cancel? Is that the door? Was that the car? Dare I shower? Will he ring? Most times these wives, you know, they don't even want them. They won't have love with them, you know. They put them down, you know. But they won't let them loose. My God, they will not let them loosey. And I love loosey. Oh my God, he's coming over. Face him, face him. No shift, shift, shift. Face him. Shift. (She turns away.)

Out of the dark the Landlord approaches, collecting glasses. She turns, they come face to face. Pause.

Where is he?

Landlord Who, love?

Woman A man and his woman, they were coming this way.

Landlord They just passed you love, and went out.

Woman Follow that couple.

She rushes after them.

Landlady (from offstage) Watch out love, you nearly had me over.

Landlady Who was that?

Landlord She left her scarf.

Landlady Well, take it after her quick unless you want to wear it.

Landlord takes it and exits.

Landlady starts to put a few bottles, glasses away.

Landlady (to someone leaving) Goodnight. Yeah, see you. You do if you dare. Tara. (To someone else.) One for the road is it? Okay doke. There you go love, thanks. (To someone at door.) Night.

She turns back and starts: a little boy is there.

Boy Is me Dad here?

Landlady What do you say lovey?

Boy Is me Dad here?

Landlady Well I don't know love, do you want to hitch up here and see if you can see him?

Boy nods. Landlady lifts him up on counter.

Landlady Can you see him?

Boy shakes his head.

Landlady What's his name?

Boy Frank.

Landlady Is it Frank Leigh?

Boy nods.

Landlady Oh, he's gone love, he left a while ago.

Boy nods at her words, and then starts crying his eyes out.

Landlady Oh dear, come on love, don't cry, eh?

Boy I want my Dad.

Landlady I know you do love. I know. Where've you been?

Boy (in sobs) He left me outside with some pop and some crisps and he's forgot me.

He starts crying again.

Landlady (loving him) Now, now, eh.

Boy I want my Dad.

Landlady Don't worry love, he'll be back. Listen now, listen. Is your Mummy at home?

Boy No, she's in hospital.

Landlady Well, I'll tell you what, if he doesn't turn up soon we'll go and find him, shall we? How's that, eh?

He seems to have calmed now. Then he suddenly starts crying again.

Landlady It's all right love. Hey, hey, come on now. I'll tell you what, let's have some more crisps shall we, while we're waiting eh?

He nods.

Landlady Okay. *(She goes behind bar.)* Let's see what we've got here. *(Suddenly she looks over and beyond him.)* Now look who I can see. Look who's just come back. *(Looking towards door.)*

Boy *(looks)* DADDI *(Tries to jump off, can't.)*

Landlady *helps him down, he almost starts to fall off.*

Landlady Hey, hey. You forgot something.

Gives him crisps. Then holds his face between her hands and kisses his forehead, lingering, looking at him, the child looking back. Then suddenly she comes round.

Go on now. Off you go.

He runs out towards his Dad. She watches him go. Then goes behind the bar. Gets a drink.

Landlord *(enters, calling back)* Hey Frank, what have I told you about kids in here? I don't know.

(To customers.) All right, could you drink up now. Tar. *(To Landlady.)* Drop the towel over the taps love.

She just turns away.

(He takes another glass.) Tar. *(Holds it up to look, turns it upside down, truly empty.)* You enjoyed that one didn't you. Bloody hell. Okay, see you. 'Night. Can we have your glasses please. Thank you. Tar. See you. Sleep tight.

Landlady 'Bye love.

Landlord Well that's that then. Another one over. Will you bolt up? What's up with you? Oh, I'll do it.

He goes off, hear bolts going.

He comes back in.

Landlord Come on then. *(He starts to get stuck in with the glasses.)*

Landlady Did you see that little boy?

Landlord Yeah I saw him. *(Still working.)*

Landlady Do you know what day it is today?

Landlord Yeah, another working one. Come on, let's get these lot away.

Landlady Okay. *(She puts her arm on top of counter and walks forward, all the glasses smashing to floor.)*

Landlord What you doing? OH CHRIST!

They stare at each other.

Landlady Shall I clear that side now?

She goes to do it. He grabs her.

Landlady Go on, hit me. But hit me hard.

Landlord *lets her go. He returns to work.*

Landlord I know what day it is.

Landlady Eh?

Landlord I said, I know what day it is. What do you think I am, stone?

He stops working. Looks down sink like he's going to be sick.

Landlady Seems that way.

Landlord *grabs a glass, goes to optic, lets two measures out.*

Landlady Don't.

Landlord Why not? You do.

Landlady I can stop. Oh go on, what's it to me.

Landlord That's more like it. That's nearer to it. I was getting a bit worried there, sounded like care. (*Drinks. Carries on working.*) Come on.

Landlady Eh?

Landlord Let's get going.

Landlady Is that it then? That's how you think it can go again. One little explosion, two little explosions, have a drink, carry on.

Landlord Huh. (*Working.*)

Landlady That's what's been going on for years and years. Every time we try to talk about it.

Landlord I don't know what you're on about.

Landlady You do.

Landlord Look, another time eh?

Landlady No. Not this night you don't. No slipping away. I want to talk about things.

Landlord Well I don't, okay?

Landlady You're a bastard! How the hell am I going to get this out then? How the hell am I going to get it out? I've no one to love it out of me, I've no one to knock it out of me. Just a blank man.

Landlord Tough.

She starts randomly knocking glasses off.

Landlord Don't hurt my pub!

She starts laughing.

Landlady It's not a person you know.

Landlord I know. But that's the sorry state of it. It's all I've got to care for.

Landlady Oh dear.

Landlord I hate you.

Landlady I hate you harder.

Landlord If that's the case, in these few precious hours we have to ourselves, why do we have to waste them on each other?

Landlady Because seven years ago tonight our son died . . .

There's a knock at the door. He goes out to it.

Landlord (*offstage*) No we're closed. No, no take away. No.

Bols again. Comes back in. Continues clearing away.

Landlady I feel sick. That's the first time I've said that for almost as many years. Why did it sound sorry on my lips? (*Looks up, he's not listening.*) You're not listening.

Landlord Well. (*Pause, cleaning.*) You've got to carry on. (*Pause, cleaning.*) You know that as well as I do.

She suddenly screams long, chilling and loud.

He turns to look at her, doesn't go to her, just watches until she's finished.

Then she looks up at him, like a shot animal.

Landlady I can't stand it no more! The blame hurts and burns too much.

Landlord I never blamed you.

Landlady Liar.

Landlord I did not blame you, all right?

Landlady Who did you blame then, yourself?

Landlord No.

Landlady Who did you blame then, him?

Landlord Don't say things like that!

Landlady What, leave him out of this, like he never existed, is that what you're saying?

Landlord Stop. Stop with your filth!

Landlady What? . . . You're mad.

Landlord (*back to work*) Leave the dead.

Landlady God you're worse than me.

Landlord (*working on*) I'm worse than no one, just leave it, eh?

Landlady Look we've got to get this out for our own sanity.

Landlord You worry about that, I'm all right.

Landlady It's rotted us.

Landlord Well, what's the point of bothering then?

Landlady You cold gone bastard.

Landlord Aye.

She grabs up a glass to him. He turns to her, lifts his chin.

Landlord Go on break it and shove it in where it's soft.

Go on. (*Waits.*) You want to, and I don't mind.

She drops glass.

Landlady What have we come to?

She turns away.

He stays in that position, chin up.

Pause.

She turns back. She looks at him standing there like that.

Still in that position, like a statue, he speaks. Eyes closed.

Landlord I loved it when we all loved. When we all were loving. Him and . . . When we were . . . Me and you bickered like we do now, all very funny, all on the surface, but love was underneath then. Now it's hate. Hate for sure.

Silence.

Landlord *opens eyes.*

I see him every day.

My son.

Pause.

I remember when he could . . .

Pulling at the crates like his Dad.

He thought he could do it, didn't he?

I see him here like as . . .

In his pyjamas.

At night his hair was always . . . (*Touches his own head.*)

Peeping in the pub. You'd shout, but I'd always let him in, and lift him up and on the counter.

Oh God, how do you die when you're seven years old.

Covers his eyes.

Pause.

When it happened I had to turn away. I thought later I could turn back, but I couldn't. Nothing healed, it just went harder and harder and harder.

Landlady And you blamed.

Landlord No.

Landlady Liar!

Landlord No.

Landlady A blaming man. A stupid blaming man.

Landlord No.

Landlady Yes!

Landlord You were driving!

Landlady Yes!

Landlord Let's stop this.

Landlady You can't do that to me. It has to be out!

Landlord No more. (*Shakes his head.*)

Landlady Yes, all of it. We were flung. Cars in the back and side. And a over and a over. I looked at him, he was going like a rag doll, this way and that, this way and that, his little mouth wide open. Then I was gone. In the ambulance, bits I remember, some blanket round me, blood in the wool. At the hospital I remember nothing, just a black, red, black, red, like some old coal, coming and going for a very long time. When I came to I knew he'd gone. Later, one of the nurses told me. Later, you came. There were flowers everywhere. You told me you'd buried him, you said you couldn't keep his body all that time while I was in the coma. But I knew you'd done it because you blamed me.

Landlord No.

Landlady He went without my goodbye. I didn't see him in his suit and tie, in his little coffin. I saw him with his mouth wide open.

Landlord Stop.

Landlady No. No. I couldn't tell what was left between us in the hospital. But when I came home the cold set in. Really frightening cold. And we stood like strangers upstairs. And we've stood that way ever since.

He nods.

Pause.

Silence.

Landlord Please know now, I didn't blame you. And I didn't want to do that to you. But I couldn't touch anything. Please know. I had no blame. Just hard, everything hard.

Landlady Why couldn't you tell me that?

Landlord Couldn't say any . . . And from then on. All this time wouldn't talk about it, so you couldn't talk about it. I thought about it, but knew you thought I didn't. And in my quiet you thought I blamed, but I didn't. Such a lot in hurt inside. Solid. Hard.

Landlady We've held ourselves for all these years, sick of our own arms squeezing, squeezing.

They look at each other. It seems they're going to embrace. But he turns and takes a glass, and begins washing it.

Landlord In the morning, you bring his picture down and you put it up there, will you?

She nods.

They both start to clean up and put away a while, in silence.

Landlady I'll cash up tomorrow.

Landlord Aye. I'll just switch off.

He turns lights out.

In the dark.

Landlord I love you.

Landlady I love you too.