

CHECK OUT

By Jonathan Chadwick

8th draft

Az Theatre

55 Windsor Road

London N76JL

+44 207 263 9807

Old man, on the move, sitting in a large urban railway station. Distraught, desperate. Going camping. He is surrounded by the urban riot, the insurrection. It plays on suspended televisions. Sounds of shots and sirens and huge crowds. The smell of tear gas seeps through the air.

Yet it is obviously a theatre, remnants of other plays, scenery, props and costumes. There is a dressing room table with make up, hair brushes etc. set on the diagonal with a mirror with lights around it.

The theatre stage is cavernous and 'badly' lit except for the central playing area.

A young woman with a motorbike helmet and elbow and knee protectors, cut off jeans shorts, tee shirt, bandana and/or anti-tear gas mask around her face, rushes in out of breath.

Maisie: Late!

She takes off her helmet

Here take it. Put it on. They're after me! *Pause. He looks.* The law, you stupid bastard. Hide me!

Ow: Leave me alone.

Maisie: Leave you alone? Leave you alone! You want to be on your own in a railway station?

Ow: What do you want?

Maisie: Temporary accommodation! Think of something! Quick!

Ow: Pretend you're my daughter.

Maisie: I am your daughter!

Ow: I don't have a daughter.

Maisie: Oh yes you do.

She launches herself onto his knee and puts her thumb in her mouth and rocks. She is like a foetus. He has caught her as if he is about to lift her.

Never did this, did we?

Ow: I'll protect you.

Maisie: They couldn't give a fuck.

Ow: They won't come in here.

Maisie: They're beating the shit out of people

He holds onto her tightly, comfortingly, protectively.

Ow: I have ta'en too little care of this.

Maisie: What?

She starts to disengage.

What did you say?

Ow: Nothing.

Maisie: You're an old nutter!

Ow: The tyranny of the open night.

Maisie: You're on the run. You're running away. Get out of town quick. Lock up your mansions! Whose side are you on, Grandpa?

Ow: The wretches.

Maisie: What?

Ow: The wretched.

Maisie: Who?

Ow: Of the Earth. (Pause) What are you feeling?

Maisie: All there is to feel.

Ow: And can I feel what you feel?.

Maisie: Not until you're dead, you won't.

Ow: I'm not running. I'm heading for the mountains to join the resistance. I'm running away from art.

Maisie: Art?

She abruptly gets off his knee

Ow: Yes I'm entangled in art.

Maisie: I'm your art, man! Paint me. I'm your paper. Write on me.

Ow: Useless dreams! The soldiers are taking over! It's becoming a war.

Maisie: War against war! I can smell the earth. Through all this stone and rubble and concrete and glass and cement and steel. The earth is yearning for us. Come to your senses, Grandpa! Your senses!!! Live.

Ow: Generation after generation.

Maisie: I wanted to live!!!

She attacks him. Fists flailing.

Ow: Whipped into obedience.

Maisie: An old, old story!

Ow: Seen it before!

She suddenly stands away from him. Angry.

Maisie: I know everything. I can see everything. That's why I'm here. That's why I'm fighting. For justice. Give us a chance!

(Suddenly realising)

Ow: You're in my mind.

Maisie: Of course I am.

Ow: A figment.

Maisie: You're running away from what you're running towards.

Ow: Oh how this mother swells up towards my heart. Hysterica passio! Down, thou rising sorrow.

He is beginning to recognise her. She becomes more distressed.

Maisie: Yes. When you recognise me I will disappear.

Ow: All the 'could have beens'. Regrets. Urges. There! *Thumps his heart.* That's where the heart lies.

Maisie: So hide me. Inside you. Please. It's so cold out here. So cold!

Ow: I see. So.

It dawns on him who she is.

Maisie: Yes. You're abandoning me.

Ow: Of course!

Maisie: You will only find me in her.

Ow: Of course!

Maisie: I won't let them get me. I will never give up.

She snatches her helmet and rushes off.

Ow: Blank space. Clean start. Where every story starts: a look in the eye. Have a look in mine. Where are you looking from? Down near the root of the guts, the deepest place in you. Where's that? Here. The world falls apart because of lies. Can that happen?

Suddenly Ja is standing in front of him. He looks up, astonished.

Ow: I...

Ja: I found you.

Ow: You.

Ja; Yes. I've changed.

Ow: But.

Ja: You don't recognise me because you don't want to.

Ow: I do.

Ja: It's like looking for something you've lost not because you need it but because you lost it.

Ow: It's been.

Ja: Ages. I know. I feel stupid now.

Ow: We're at the crossroads!

Ja: No.

Ow; I always felt, we meet at crossroads. And we're heading in different directions but.

Ja: I can't believe in things that don't exist anymore.

Ow: Have you been on the protests?

Ja: I can't fight like that.

Ow: The boys are taking over.

Ja: I've called and called you.

Ow: On the contrary. I called you.

Ja: Oh yeah.

Ow: I knew you'd come.

Ja: I should take you home.

Ow: Oh yeah.

Ja: What are you doing here?

Ow: Working things out.

Ja: Tolstoy's exit scene?

Ow: Check out time!

Ja: I can't see the point of pretending anymore.

Ow: Take from me what you need to live. I'll take from you what I need to die.

Ja: What's happened to you?

Ow: I was usurped.

Ja: Don't start.

Ow: History tricked me.

Ja: It's back to square one.

Ow: I can't bear the violence.

Ja: I have to find the person I was when I first knew you. I need to ask her some questions.

Ow: This space between us. It's what we make it. Always.

Ja: I don't want people looking at me. I've got nothing to show them.

Ow: We are on the island. You're my daughter. We are going to put everything right, make everything true to itself again. The sounds are going to solve the problem. We're able to intervene in the waves, by enactment. The cell is a metaphor, its configuration is a signal. This is what this is about.

Ja: I can't.

Ow: On the island?

Ja: Please.

Ow: Our field. Look! You want to make it happen like it used to happen.

Ja: Yes and no.

Ow: It's terminal disappointment. Our generation.

Ja: Were you going somewhere?

Ow: I am dead already but I'm leaving the walking dead behind.

Ja: You haven't changed.

Ow: I have.

Ja: I came to find you.

Ow: You want things to be as they were.

Ja: No.

Ow: Between us.

Ja: Yes and no.

Ow: On the island?

Ja: No.

Ow: On the stage in the garden by the lake?

Ja: No.

(pause)

Ow: I wanted to write for you.

Ja: I want you to be real.

Ow: That's what I want!

Ja: Do I have to be involved in your games?

Ow: You worked as a check out girl and I had a fast car.
Remember.

Ja: Piss off.

Ow: Be someone. Yeah. Be someone.

Ja: Real!

Ow: If this is a railway station then tell me why we're alone.

Ja: Please!

Ow: Is it a railway station or is it a theatre?

Ja: You can't stay out here.

Ow: Why not?

Ja: There are no trains running.

Ow: *(gently)* Stop.

Ja: What do you mean, stop.

Ow: Just stop, here, now.

Ja: Stop what?

Ow: Just stop. You never knew when to stop.

They look at each other. Pause. Real contact.

Ow: This used to be paradise.

Ja: When?

Ow: Aeons ago.

Ja: It's you who is checking out.

Ow: Of course.

Ja: You always offered me things that were out of reach. I wanted ordinary things like the feeling of putting on shoes that I wanted to wear.

Ow: But you were willing to play?

She gives way.

Ja: I held up patches of cloth against the wind, not knowing whether they'd keep the cold out or I'd set sail.

Ow: You kept diving for the treasures.

Ja: I saw passing ships without knowing I was on one.

Ow: You were waving with the flames as you burned at the stake.

Ja: I thought I was given powers to heal, that I could tame lions and I went to join the circus but when I got there I saw a queue a kilometre long and, though they all looked different, I knew we were all the same.

Ow: And now you're coming back to Daddy with a splinter in your head and no means to get it out.

Ja: Finding you, barking like a dog.

Ow: Wailing at the moon.
Ja: Out in the cold.
Ow: Yelling in the void.
Ja: Licking your old wounds.
Ow: Taking you back quickly.
Ja: Making it happen here.
Ow: At the crossroads.
Ja: Where we smell the blood of the father.
Ow: The sweat of the son.
Ja: The promise of the bride.
Ow: The lover.
Ja: The wife.
Ow: The mother.
Ja: Crawling home.
Ow: Drunk on success.
Ja: Out of your mind.
Ow: Shard sharp.
Ja: Blinking.
Ow: It doesn't matter. I could never see.
Ja: And you know it has to happen here.
Ow: Yes, where the sea beaches.
Ja: The winds cross.
Ow: They do.
Ja: The river meets the sea.
Ow: The bird nests.
Ja: The fox yells.
Ow: The stag moans.

Ja: The butterfly wings.

Ow: The bud broods.

Ja: The hornet breeds.

Ow: The bee dances.

Ja: The trout fathoms.

Ow: The fly shits

Ja: The cat crouches

Ow: The worm.

Ja: Turns.

Ow: OK?

Ja: OK.

They sing:

You woke up early

And you smelt the dawn

You sought out friends

And you avoided scorn

You gathered flowers

When the light was blue

You found a world

On water in a pink canoe

You travelled daily

When the mist had cleared

You made your thoughts

Against the things you feared

You dressed the way
The wise ones do
And covered wounds
By letting them show through

You cheered the weak
You matched the strong
You turned your cheek
You kept your song
Quite rightfully
For those you love to sing
But you forgot
The most important thing

You planted trees
And kept the peace
You always breathed
The word that hurt the least

You found your way
Through those that knew
And stopped to say
How things were touching you

You kept in mind
How things were won
When it came to hope

You outdid everyone.

Your luck held out
No-one ever knew
How your insides
Were always cheating you

You cheered the weak
You matched the strong
But couldn't speak
When you saw wrong
Quite rightfully
Was always conquering
And you forgot
The most important thing

Black out. When the lights come up Ja is dressed as a supermarket check out girl. She turns round, goes off and brings on a trolley of goods to be shelf-stacked.

Ow: The day I came into the supermarket! Wow.

Ja: I wanted to be someone.

Ow: That's it. Now you can. This is like a dark room. Like an image in a developing tray, emerging into the world, out of the nothing, out of meaninglessness, out of raw earth, out of protoplasm, taking shape like a figure from a sculptor's stone, out of darkness into light. This is how we come to be. More your self. More our selves.

Ja: No wonder I'm dreaming. I dream everyday. I'm dreaming now. It's the only freedom I have: to close my eyes. My body will

do what it needs to do to survive. It walks and breathes and holds and places and sits and presses and looks and pushes and lifts and rubs and pulls and takes and tears and takes and blinks and calls and nods and smiles and reaches and gathers. You'll never know what is really mine. The world starves me.

Ow: Excuse me.

Ja: Can I help you, sir?

Ow: Do you remember, I was in the other day. We spoke.

Ja: I'm sorry, sir.

Ow: I wanted to talk to you.

Ja: Please, sir. I can't. Yes.

Ow: I'm doing some research.

Looking around as if she might get caught.

Ja: Can I help you, sir?

Ow: Well, as I say.

Ja: Please, sir.

Ow: I just need a little of your time.

Ja: I can't talk.

Ow: After work?

Ja: I'll be working tomorrow.

Ow: So??

Ja: I can't stop, sir.

Ow: Well?

She relaxes and sits down.

Playing hard to get!

Ja: I was frightened of losing my job!

Ow: But you wanted to live another life.

Ja: You studying me?

Ow: I'm just learning how to breathe.

Ja: You do drama?

Ow: I'm working on a play about a girl from Chile. She loses her family in the coup. She's born in 1973, the only survivor. She arrives in England. She is a baby. She is adopted.

Ja: Was it a true story?

Ow: She runs away.

Ja: This isn't me.

Ow: I know. It's what I was working on when we met.

Ja: And she works in a supermarket?

Ow: Yes. I wanted to find out about you because I thought you were like her.

Ja: That's how our story began?

Ow: Yes. But her story was the story of the times, of how we became rich and mad, with money flooding our minds.

Ja: So what happened to that story?

Ow: People are still telling it. Isn't that what's happening on the streets?

Ja: But what happened to her?

Ow: She went back on 12 March 1990. She was seventeen. Pinochet had stepped down the day before. She wanted to be a singer but she met a woman in a bar who persuaded her to train to be a lawyer. She swore to bring him to justice.

Ja: Did she?

Ow: Nearly.

Ja: But you never made it, did you?

Ow: No.

Ja: Because it was just a good idea.

Ow: Maybe.

Ja: You see, you can't just write ideas. You can't act ideas.

Ow: You can't act without them.

Ja: That's not what I meant.

Ja: This (*her costume*) is no good. (*she gets up*). I'm an actress now. (*pause*) I'm a seagull. That can't be right. (*pause*) That's it. You are at a railway station and you're stuck. You're confused and I've come to find you and take you home. But you confuse me.

Ow: You were a new beginning.

Ja: I was a girl.

Ow: Hope. For me.

Ja: It's fantasy.

Ow: And you have work to do.

Ja: Yes I do.

Ow: And you came to find me?

Ja: Why can't you write real parts. All I get are thesesuggestions....situations. Nothing made of earth. Nothing on earth. All in the air. Nothing ever happens. It all comes to nothing. (*Pause/Change*) Like our child!

Ow: Is that the way you're thinking about it?

Ja: Not it!

Ow: I can't tell you how often I've thought.

Ja: You've thought!

Ow: You've never wanted to talk.

Ja: It's painful.

Ow: We never talked.

Ja: I felt powerless.

Ow: But it was your decision.

Ja: You don't know me. You can't know me.

Ow: Is this what you came to talk about?

Ja: No. Yes. You did it! You paid!

Ow: I paid!? (*Change.*) I might have paid.

Ja: You did.

Ow: You didn't want the child to get in the way.

Ja: There was somebody else in your mind at the time.

Ow: Getting in the way of your being an actress, of your success.

Ja: It was an accident.

Ow: And that was the end of it.

Ja: You were old enough to be my father.

Ow: I still am.

Ja: You are.

Ow: Who was on my mind?

Ja: The Chilean lawyer.

Ow: No.

Ja: Right from the beginning. Some epic you had in your head!

Ow: It wasn't to be.

Ja: But that loss.

Ow: Yes.

Ja: You can never make up for it.

Ow: It was a decision about who we thought we were, about who you might become.

Ja: But she did.

Ow: Who?

Ja: Jocasta.

Ow: Ah!

Ja; Maybe she made up for it.

Ow: I see

Ja: I'm playing Jocasta.

Ow: The crossroads.

Ja: It was her son that killed him. Oh yes.

Ow: It all comes together and falls apart right here at this damned crossroads.

Ja: He was her agent. She was the guilty one! She passed on vengeance with the last drop of her milk. *(pause/change)* But does she really know he is her son?

Ow: The feeling in your heart towards the father as he tears the infant away from your breast, his jealous rage, the vengeance in your heart, your inner curse! And for him, the dreadful memory of not being able to give way, the glazed spinning nausea of loss, the hot welling blood around the eyes, the destruction of the other, the envy in the soul, a hatred of power that asserts itself like power, a provocative resemblance, a terrifying mirror, brute threatening majesty. Yes, and the old husband heading out to search for the truth!

Ja: By the time she hangs herself? Of course she knows. But so does everybody else. So when does she know? She wants to stop him finding out something she knows herself. Or does she? When he is in Colonus with his daughter he has a chance to make it clear. He works it out with the people there. They accept he never knew. But did she? Just to survive. When he turns up does she think? He could be my son. He wants me. What power do women have? I don't know. Does she pretend not to know and is so good at pretending? Is she in a dream and just doesn't want to wake up? Later, when it comes to it. You can feel it welling up from her guts. Nightmares! That's where they come from. This is a nightmare. I don't know what's happening.

Ow: And maybe neither does she.

Ja: I'm fed up with playing victims. When am I going to have control over my life? Sitting waiting for other people to make decisions about me! *(Pause/Change)* How long is she in grief for her baby? She's a broken woman. Does she agree to her baby being killed? It was just his jealousy, her frightened, old husband. The king!! So then no more children. For years. She must be pining for her loss.

Ow: And you know how that feels.

Ja: If you lose your baby, that baby will grow up in your mind, in your dreams. You've never had to push him away, get him to walk, make sure he can look after himself, can clothe and wash himself, can tell the world what he wants. Even if it's you just wondering what he would have been, how he would have loved, how he would wake up in the morning to find his life anew. But you never knew him. So he is a perfection. (*Change*) Imagine him walking in the door. Shattering self-knowledge. So wise and daring. He loves you with his eyes as if he has discovered again the world before his loss. Then the love happens that completes, (*short pause*) that assuages the secret wounds that seem to match when your deepest souls meet, when you seem to know things that can't be imagined, like a movement of the shoulder that eases an embrace. It's as if your pain fits together or, of course, it's the same pain from the same event. How can you love so much without feeling that you have transcended your life and your former pain urges you to ask forgiveness because it's like a blessing, this chance, this co-

Pause

Incidence.

Ow: Now you're talking.

Ja: And the love is just a forgetting and a remembering.

Ow: He feels all this too but never suspects. With every blissful move he evades his fate.

Ja: At Colonus the chorus, the people, they tell him that the greatest blessing is not to have been born.

Ow: To be a possibility.

Ja: To be saved from this existence.

Ow: But you have to be born somewhere.

Ja: And from there we make each other.

Ow: There's no essential will, you mean?

Ja: Just circumstances. That's all she is then. Just circumstances. There's nothing inside. Make up.

Ja starts to prepare her face to make up as Jocasta. During the subsequent dialogue she is transforming herself from a

supermarket check out cashier to the Queen of Thebes, wife of Laius and mother and wife to Oedipus.

Ow: There is no story left to tell. Events follow one another. Collapsing into each other like a house of cards. That's what brought me here. I had nowhere else to go. On my way to the oracle. Where I met the stranger that killed me. I left that morning at dawn. They'd already lit fumigators to keep out the stink of death. I saw them moving the corpses out on to the street to wait for the morning collection. The fires at the gates of the city were being fuelled ready. What had we done? Your eyes resented the light. The hope of dreams still lingered. What had we not done? The sphinx had come between us. Birds had fallen dead from the skies. We heard them on the roof. The corn turned to pus. You could hear the monster cackling. People looked up when we rode by as if we were fleeing the city. I had to keep my eyes on the road. We already knew that man was man's worst enemy. We'd started to build our cities. Something deep had gone wrong. We'd fouled our nest. Some split within us. We'd lost touch with our earth. Each step to save us took us deeper into the void. We'd sacrificed our child to save the state. We forgot love. The oracle was always cruel and the road dusty. I was full of anger. Our breakfast had been silent and tasted sour. Despite the air on the open road I smelt Thebes. And when I didn't return?

Ja: My mouth dried up.

Ow: And when the man came?

Ja: The one we gave our baby to. It was him!

Ow: I know.

Ja: I broke the mirror and looked at the shards with hunger.

Ow: I saw him scamper off.

Ja: He shook and shook.

Ow: Like a crab from under a lifted rock.

Ja: And shook.

Ow: The killer laughed at me.

Ja: Our baby.

(pause/change)

Ow: So why have you come to where the three roads meet?

Ja: I couldn't get him out of my mind.

Ow: You were a girl when we married.

Ja: Out of my dreams.

Ow: You seemed to know everything. Like a fresh leaf.

Ja: I told him he could go. The man. Sent him away. I didn't want the past.

Ow: You even looked at what you were about to eat with pride.

Ja: And when this boy solved the riddle, he laughed and laughed.

Ow: Your skin was like light.

Ja: I remembered love.

Ow: The future is the past in disguise.

Ja: We laughed at the same pain. We laughed it away. I felt his stomach like a baby kicking next to mine. Infectious.

Ow: You were like water running through my hands.

Ja: Four babies and still.

Ow: I didn't want fear to get you.

Ja: Each one was a new space that got bigger and bigger and I was in the centre of it.

Ow: Why was it so good to have you to take care of, to feel you depending on me? Is that what I wanted for myself? I didn't want to let you go.

Ja: I was in bliss. You can't live like that. I didn't want to put two and two together. Never. Never. I knew but I didn't know. Imagining it all breaking down. No safety. Once we'd started. What are we? We can't remake ourselves until we can see what we're made of. Go into the void. It's never empty. Leap. But when life plays tricks on you like it did on her! At Colonus he could get people to believe that he never knew. ***She looks at the pin clasp that holds her dress together.*** Why couldn't she? Did she

hate her beauty? *Pause*. I can't play this part. It's turning me down.

Ow sits legs crossed.

Ow: There is the reptilian response which is shutdown. Startle. Blank. There's the mammalian response which is fight or flight. It's to do with connecting this (*points to his stomach*) with this (*he points to his head*). We are looking for the connected response.

Ja: So this is our field.

Ow: Yes, where ideas are embodied.

Ja: Thought is action.

Ow: Yes.

Ja: We are allowed to dream.

Ow: Yes.

Ja: But we cannot undo the past.

Ow: Or repeat it.

Ja: Always moving on.

Ow: In the instant.

Ja: A moment of...I don't know...being, before we all of us carry on. Not going back but forward. And that is the point of this stopping. This space.

Ow: And we can change this space.

Ja: Not by nothing happening we can't.

Ow: Or by forcing it.

Ja: But this is our life. This is our time. All of us.

Ow: We have to feel safe..

Ja: Yeah well it's safe.

Ow: Inside.

Ja: It's okay. It's safe.

Ow: The world can't be made better through fear.

Ja: Okay it's joy. Look I'm joyful.

Ow: We have to go into the space between breathing out and breathing in.

Ja: Yes but not here! We can't do this now!

Ow: It's a question of preparation, of suspending habitual responses, of opening up neural pathways that connect us up. Inside. You said it.

Ja: No look. I don't believe this.

Ow: AUM!! I'm going into a deep trance.

Ja: I'm really sorry about this.

She starts pushing and pulling him as if to get him to wake up.

Come on. Come on.

Ow: AAAUUUUUMMMM.

She gives up.

Ja: What drives her? What does she want? To protect her children? Even those that haven't been born? Self-protection? This urge, to contact, to share, to make a nest! But the nest is in the world. She's defending it against the world. She doesn't want the world in there. If it gets in she's dead. (*change*) During those days when we occupied the square, I'd crept out of the house each morning. My mother knew but if we didn't meet she didn't need to admit it. After the attack and the killing, that morning my mother was waiting for me in the kitchen. She had her outdoor coat on. Where are you going, I said. I'm coming with you. They are killing my children, she said. That was my mother. (*pause*) What is this affinity? As for me, it's to do with smell. Maybe. In China a family will take on a girl child and raise her to marry their son. If they come into the family before they are about thirty months old then the marriage doesn't work. Little daughters-in-law. Kinship. Is that to do with smell? There could have been no recognition but maybe a possibility. Taboo. *She looks at Ow who is smiling beatific.* He's leaving me to work it out on my own. How am I like her? How am I dislike, no unlike, her? What is this (*she indicates her body*) that traps me and makes me share the world? It imprisons me and delivers me. See! Dust. Can I become what I

am? Doesn't make sense. This feeling, here (*in her guts*) wanting to come out. This wreck of guts heading for forever. This pulse of blood, bag of skin, urging me. This stench of hair, muck of juice, sump of mucus. (*pause*) I want to take him because he will destroy me? Me Consumed. For now. In the moment. Just for now. It's all there is. This edge. This high, keen edge and then solution. He's already been torn away from me once. I'll never let go. Opened up. Eviscerated. No. I'm not a wound. I won't be protected, martyred, sacred, displayed. Her body, my fate. It's injustice. I'm raw with with it. I fucking hate it, hate it for the world, for my eggs, for my hands, for my face. (*change*) We have to make our lives up from the stuff of this world. If it comes apart then stick it back together again! Make it work for us. Break down this might. Shatter the armour. But she couldn't. How could she be so powerful but with no power? Guilty of passion. Was she?

Ow comes out of his trance.

Ow: Where are we? Where am I? I was blind and you were guiding me.

Ja: Blind in a dream?

Ow: Yes. And we came to a place we had to stop. There was a grove. I could smell the trees. I felt the wind on my face and I could hear it in the trees. It was a sacred place. There were goddesses. I could feel peace coming. But what had I done? Why was I being punished? Why punish myself? Blinded so I could see inside better. Just closing your eyes is as good.

Ja: And you led me there.

Ow: So we could finally say goodbye.

Ja: In our hearts. Really say goodbye. Is that what you want?

Ow: It's a ritual. That's what it is. We have to find the form. It has to be a libation. Here, we must make the earth drink. No wine. Only water. And twigs of olive. Help me prepare.

Ja: Prepare what? What are you talking about?

Ow: I had to be an outcast. What good could I do? Except die meaningfully. All I know is that you have to break it down into its smallest possible components. The world, I mean. You have to bring it closer. The further away you think about, the less you can do. This head-stuff is crap. You have to embody! And then

disappear! Antigone! Help me! This is why we have come to this place. It's a place of forgiveness.

Ja: Mother, wife and now daughter!

Ow: Yes. I'm not killed by the son at the crossroads. I'm led by the daughter to the home which is not a home. The birthplace of the poet!

Ja: I don't know where you're going with this.

Ow: Athens! Colonus! Remember! Pure the hands. Pure the water. Pure as the nightingale's song. A moment of beauty.

Ja: You have to go home.

Ow: I feel the shade of Sophocles!

Ja: They told me you were here at the station.

Ow: Is that right?

Ja: I couldn't work it out.

Ja: I have to get you out of here.

Ow: So you came to find me. Your mother sent you? No that's not right. That's Tolstoy. You know the way?

Ja: Home?

Ow: Where else?

Ja: You want to be left on your own.

Ow: There's no alone! That illusion is a nightmare. It's the basis of their system, the logic of the bank, the legal person they smash you into, the comparative advantage of the dead. It's the function of the uniform, to remake you in the image of the one! That's what's happening out there! The men! They say they're protecting the weak but it's their weakness. They are making the women sacred. It's a curse. They're making it into a war.

Ja: Self-alteration. That's all I can do to free me from this. That's the way what can't be embodied can get out. Out there. To make life. Not blood and guts but what happens between us. She kept being put back in her body. He put her back in her body. Like fate.

Ow: That's why we have come here, to find the human face, to make war against war. Look at me.

They look at each other.

Ja: That's what gives us who we are. The image that our mother shows us in the mirror.

Ow: And he saw it! He saw through it! Nobody else could. It's riddle of the sphinx. Do you want a cup of tea?

Ow brings out a little camping gaz stove and a saucepan or kettle.

Ja: Have you any coffee?

Looks in his rucksack.

Ow: Yep. Is there water on your trolley?

She gets some water from the supermarket trolley.

Ja: Yep. Why don't you use an electric kettle.

Ow: Because we're at the crossroads. Remember. Or rather we are in the grove.

Ja: Yes. But.

Ow: I know. I know.

Ja: He has the energy of someone who defies fate. She loves it.

Ow: That's why he must be broken. Blinded.

Ja: But she leaves him to his despair. Just leaves. Abandons her child a second time around.

Ow: Yes, there are always limits. (*change*) When your time is up! Best to go.

Ja: And her children? Her other children?

(pause)

Ow: They've privatised the home and cut us off from the public space; then they spy on it to ensure our dumbness.

Ja: Is this what this story is about? She 'disappears' herself!

Ow: They've taken our sex from us and made it into a parade. They've taken our wombs away, disconnected us inside, broken us down. First we were thrown off the land and now they've dispossessed us of our bodies! We don't belong to ourselves any more.

Ja: They've! They've! They've! Tell me another story.

Ow: They've taken all the love stories.

Ja: And I suppose they took our baby away!!?

Ow: My last chance.

Ja: Is this what you wanted to tell me?

Ow: We were going to change the world with love.

Ja: Maybe that was her illusion too.

Ow: What happened here (*indicates space between them*) was what was true and that truth was more than any victory.

Ja: It's indestructible.

Ow: But it's not!!

Ja: You didn't fail.

Ow: I loved you

Ja: Well that's something.

Ow: That's right. Our paths crossed.

Ja: But it's not fate.

Ow: Well, play her like that!!!!

Pause.

Ja: I remember asking my mother if there was anything she'd ever been sure of with every single cell in her body. She didn't hesitate. She told me about the feeling when she gave birth to me. She said she knew then completely and absolutely that in my life I would know, I don't know, take part in, witness, the great flowering of humanity.

Ow: Ah to reach fruition.

Ja: Are you sure, I said, with every minute tissue of your being?
Completely.

Ow: To be who you really are!

Ja: Given half a chance.

Ow: But to live out of your time. Born wrong!

Ja: That just isn't possible.

Ow: To see too deeply and too much.

Ja: This isn't seeing.

Ow: To turn away from what you truly believe is valuable for the
temporary advantage of comfort.

Ja: Then don't.

Ow: I saw her.

Ja: Who?

Ow: Our daughter.

Ja: Our son!

Ow: No. She was here.

Ja: So it's because of him!

Ow: Her! I was a bird, an old bird, and I flew high and found no
place to land, like the doves before the flood abated. I flew on and
on. There was no rest. Yet I couldn't die. I would never tire and
would fly on through all eternity.

Ja: You were dreaming.

Ow: I couldn't find the earth but I could hear her calling throughout
the lonely dark nights and the short glimmering days. She was
what didn't happen. And I understood she was only a sound, a
caught vibration in the universe, a possibility. Then through the
clouds that drifted apart I saw the island and my heart leapt. If
only I could find that island! But it disappeared. And then I saw the
wreck of our stage in the garden by the lake and I looked around
for you.

Ja: I couldn't stay.

Ow: I wanted so much to follow you, to be human but then I heard a soaring sound like wind rushing at high speed. I wanted my mother's body around me and then my daughters sent me out into the cold and I was in a storm and the storm was in me. It was tearing me apart and I had to keep flying on and on and then in a crash of lightning that seemed to go on forever I saw the old gardener, a rake in his hand, looking up towards the glowing window for a glimpse of the Emperor's lover. I saw him beat the drum and heard his heart break before he threw himself in the pond.

Ja: But he came back like a demon from the pond and dragged her down to his painful watery grave.

Ow: Yes the monsters of the deep were groaning with rage as I flew over the ocean. The water was turning to acid but how could I help them. I had no hands. I couldn't believe I had no hands. I only had wings and I couldn't stop flying but I knew time was running out. I hadn't done what I meant to do. I'd had an idea of how things could be but now I'd half forgotten it. I wanted to write it down and give to somebody but I was a bird. I kept shouting freedom but it just sounded as if I was calling for help.

Ja strikes a chord on the guitar. They sing.

I am lonely on this earth
The cold wind blows no good
Eyes can't reach up to the sky
Nothing turns out like it should.

I saw him underneath a tree
Just listening to the song
Standing there so nakedly
To none could he belong

And I asked him
Tell me
What you mean by love
He said

Build your time
Clear the space
Dig down deep
Keep your face

Up you climb
Down you go
Spirit's fine.
Move and flow
Make it live
Make it show

Working at it in my mind
To make my deeds come true
Got to find out why we're here
Never all we have to do

I saw her glancing by the sea
In her eye the shrill wave sang
She pierced the wind so perfectly
No brighter light could by her stand

And I asked her
Tell me
What you mean by love
She said

Build your time
Clear the space
Dig down deep
Keep your face
Up you climb
Down you go
Spirit's fine.
Move and flow
Make it live
Make it show

So I carried on my way
Tears were swimming through my feet
Confident I couldn't say
What or who out there I'd meet

Then I saw them dancing free
Their feet were beating out the land
Their hands were warm and beckoned me
And I could feel the sweet air stand

So I asked them
Tell me
What you mean by love
They came

And swept me in their arms
Carried me away from harms
And put me back inside myself
And left me singing by myself

Build your time
Clear the space
Dig down deep
Keep your face
Up you climb
Down you go
Spirit's fine.
Move and flow
Make it live
Make it show.

Ja transforms into the ghost/figure of Maisie.

Maisie: Help me. I'm freezing. I'm burning with the cold. It's turning into gold. It's all gold. It's liquid. It's rising like a tide. Everything is only what it says it is. Get it wrong and burn from the inside. It's phosphorescence. It's white death. Too many pictures. The eyes are raw with seeing. See. See. See. See. See. I've got no skin. Skinned and sinking. Skinned and sinking. Chains for clothes. Oil for homes. Image for food. Mirror for wall. Slap for hand. Break for head. Born in a dream. Born in a dream. I never was. Unless. Un. Less. Un. Less. Un. Less. Practical life. Tells us that. We see it first. Inside our head. Bringing it into being. Into being. Yes. Yes. Baring it. Bearing it. Forming it. Hand and brain. Hand and brain. Yes. Grasp. Shape. AAAAAAAHHHHHHHH. Then I hear it. No. I heard it first. The bones sing. Yes this is it. All one. It's all one. Get the fucking priests. Take them to a beach. Get them in the sea. Give them a commercial. Make them into statues. Turn them into menswear. Deconsecrate their bollocks. It's all one. It's us. We are responsible. We are doing it. No power. No power. No power greater than. No power greater

than...water, air, earth, of which we are made. We are made to be.

Ja/Maisie takes a large piece of paper and wraps it around Ow. She then takes sticky tape and wraps it right round him and takes gold spray paint and sprays the wrapped up Ow with it. His head protrudes from the top of this gold parcel. As she does this she repeats randomly phrases from the above speech

Ow: Ah. That's better.

Ja: So have you done what you wanted?

Ow: Pretty much.

Ja: So it's done.

Ow: I've given you back your self.

Ja: This is your gift?

Ow: It's yours.

Ja: Now.

Ow: What are you going back to? The street? Or the stage?

Ja: Where I act?

Ow: Yes.

Ja: Where I dispel the fear of chaos?

Ow: Dispel it.

Ja: So I needed you.

Ow: Who called who?

Ja: She is on the run. In flight. I can see that.

Ow: You aren't but I was.

Ja: I condemn her and I love her.

Ow: And the other story is real, isn't it? The one about the human face. It is happening.

Ja: It is happening if we want it to happen.

Ow: Like the island. Don't leave us on this island. Release us with your hands.

Ja: Yes. It's not just a question of wanting.

Ow: The sphinx. The conundrum. The mystery.

Ja: What we cannot know on our own...

Ow:we have to know together.

Ja: I came to take you back.

Ow: Tell me before we go: Is the mystery between us like the space between the stars?

Ja: The goddess said, when he finally got to speak to her: What is thought is what exists. The knower is the known.

Ow: You've been the light.

Ja: Release me.

Ow: Free yourself.

Ja: I'm tangled up.

Ow: In stories?

Ja: In your situations.

Ow: At the crossroads.

Ja: But I want the stage and the street.

Ow: Heaven and hell.

Ja: Everywhere.

Ow: I'll die here. In my dreams. You've told me all I need to know.

Ja: So you're not going to the mountains. Or was it the forest?

Ow: No. I have to take it home with me and join the others.

Ja: On the streets?

Ow: Wherever.

THE END

Goodbye (not) again

Song by Jonathan Chadwick

Here we take our leave
Not knowing how to speak
Or where to put our eyes
And I cant even breathe

Show me how to do it better
Show me how to do it right
Really is the fear that gets me
As I resist it tightens tight
Oh I cant bear the pain
I cant say goodbye again

I hear you draw the curtains
Your footfall on the stairs
I hug you in the distance
I know that you're elsewhere

Teach me how to do it better
Teach me how to do it right
Really is the fear that gets me
As I resist it tightens tight
Oh I can't bear the pain
I cant be alone again.

The unimaginable goodbyes
In the cities of the world
Parting souls and grieving eyes.
Every corner ever turned
Smashes looks of promise
And evaporates your kiss
Into rumours of past bliss

You might arrive at any time
I'm waiting for a glimpse of you
My heart is aching blind
How can I see this through?

Teach me how to do it better
Show me how to do it right
Really is the fear that gets me
As I resist it tightens tight
Oh I cant bear the pain
I cant say goodbye again

