

In a dimly lit living room JACK is seated on a sofa, head in hands, a cordless telephone on the coffee table in front of him. After a while the telephone begins to ring. He answers it immediately.

JACK

Hello?

(Beat.)

No, I don't. I just told you I didn't!

(JACK hangs up the phone abruptly. Momentarily there is heard the sound of a door opening and closing offstage.)

RACHEL

(Off.)

Jack? Jack, are you up?

(RACHEL enters, somewhat distraught.)

RACHEL

Jack...Jack?

(She switches on an additional light. With a sigh of relief.)

Oh, thank God, there you are!

JACK

(Angrily.)

I think that's my line, actually? Where the fuck have you been, for God's sake?

RACHEL

Oh, Jack, oh God, I'm so sorry. Oh, don't be cross, please don't, please! I meant to call you. I tried, I did honestly, but—

JACK

Do you know what time it is? Do you have any idea what I've—

RACHEL

I know, I know—

JACK

No you don't know! You don't have a clue. I've been worried sick. I've called the police, the hospitals, your parents, the—

RACHEL

Oh, shit! Shit! I know, I know. I know you think that I don't, but I do. I know I should've phoned, but I couldn't. I couldn't, Jack, believe me.

JACK

Couldn't – or couldn't be bothered?

RACHEL

Couldn't, Jack, I couldn't.

(Beat.)

Sometimes...sometimes things just happen, completely unexpected things. Things that...that you have no control over and...and that's what happened to me...tonight...today. I thought of you, of course. I thought of you often. But I couldn't call you. I was...I was somewhere else.

JACK

You don't say?

(Beat.)

Phew, well that's that taken care of. Good, good I feel much better now. Thank you for that.

RACHEL

(Insistent.)

Jack, listen to me, I couldn't.

JACK

Why, because you forgot the number? Or were your fingers temporarily paralyzed?

RACHEL

Of course not, I just...

JACK

Just what? You just didn't think is what you just. You just didn't stop for one minute to think about me – about the worry you'd cause, about what I might be thinking. God, if you knew...if you'd seen some of the scenarios I'd had going through my head...

(Shaking his head.)

I don't even want to think about it now.

RACHEL

(A deep sigh. Then, methodically.)

Look, I know it was wrong. I know I should've called and I didn't. I didn't mean to make you worry. It was irresponsible and I apologise – I do really. But I can't change what's already happened. And I'm here now and I'm alright – I'm fine, as you can see. Actually, I...I'm more than fine.

RACHEL (Cont'd.)

(With a self-conscious laugh.)

Actually, I...I feel great, actually.

JACK

(Sarcastically.)

Do you, actually? Oh, that's fantastic!

RACHEL

Oh, Jack, don't be like that, please. If you'll just let me explain you'll understand everything.

JACK

Yes, of course I will.

RACHEL

(Insistent.)

Yes you will – I promise you will. It'll all be clear, everything will make sense – just like it did for me. Just hear me out...please.

JACK

Oh, I'll hear you out. You needn't think I'm going to sit up half the night waiting for you without expecting to hear a bloody good explanation as to why.

RACHEL

Only, try to be open-minded about what I'm about to tell you, because...well, just try to keep an open mind, that's all.

JACK

(Coldly.)

I said I'd listen, and that's what I'll do.

RACHEL

Okay, alright, alright.

(Beat.)

I...well, it all began at the top of King Street at about three-thirty this afternoon and I...God, that sounds like I just made it up, doesn't it?

JACK

Did you?

RACHEL

(Beat.)

Do you want to hear this or don't you?

JACK
I said I'd listen, and I'm listening.

RACHEL
Okay. So I...
(Standing and moving upstage R. to the drinks cabinet.)
Look, if you don't mind I'm going to pour myself a quick nightcap – I think I need a stiffener.

JACK
Another one?

RACHEL
What?

JACK
Never mind.

RACHEL
I thought you said, "Another one?"

JACK
I thought you said, "What?"

RACHEL
(Beat.)
Do you want one?

JACK
No.

RACHEL
(As she pours her drink.)
So... anyway, I'd just stepped outside of Marks & Spencer's and was pointing myself toward the bus stop, feeling more than a little bit pissed off to tell you the truth, because they'd had a taupe jacket in there that I'd–

JACK
A what?

RACHEL
A taupe jacket.

JACK
What in God's name's taupe?

RACHEL

It's a colour.

JACK

(After a sigh.)

Alright, carry on.

RACHEL

(Returning with her drink.)

Anyway, I'd had my eye on it for quite some time, and I'd tried it on more than once to see if I thought it suited me or not. So, after yet another mental tug-of-war over *need* versus *want*, and feeling guilty about people in Somalia with no arms, I'd finally plucked up the courage to go in and buy it, only to be informed that after all that they didn't even have my size in stock anymore. So off I strode, marching down the street with a severe case of the-world-hates-my-guts-and-the-feeling's-mutual, and just an over all sense of being persecuted and conspired against in general, when suddenly this old man threw himself in front of me – I mean literally *threw* himself – and almost sent me flying! Of course my knee-jerk English reaction was to apologise as graciously as possible and hurry way in embarrassment. But for some unknown reason some semblance of clarity rose to the surface, and I realised that it wasn't my fault and I shouldn't apologise, and so I didn't; I just glared at him and waited for him to. But he didn't either: he simply stared at me. So I said, "Don't look at me like that, it was your fault." But still he said nothing – just stared. So I sort of sneered at him as best I could and said, "I see – too important to say you're sorry, I suppose?" But he just smiled at me. Not a mean-spirited smile – more kindly than anything. And all he said was, "What's wrong?"

(Pause.)

JACK

And you said, "You."

RACHEL

No, I didn't, I...I couldn't somehow. There was something about...his face, the way he was looking at me...I didn't know what to say.

JACK

And then, like an idiot, you apologised.

RACHEL

No, I didn't. I told you I didn't. And actually, the longer I stood there the more angry I got – *really* angry, actually – and I was half tempted to say, "Look, you blind old bastard, why the hell don't you watch where you're walking!" But I didn't. I controlled myself and calmed myself, and...I don't know...it was the

RACHEL (Cont'd.)

way his eyes were looking at me – into me. It sounds ridiculous, but it was as though I felt compelled to tell him the truth.

JACK

About him being a blind old bastard?

RACHEL

(A little impatient.)

Of course not: about why I was upset.

JACK

And did you?

RACHEL

Well how could I? What was I going to do, relate to him the heartbreaking tragedy of my obsession with a taupe-coloured jacket in Marks & Spencer's over several weeks of my precious and very limited life span, and how I'd just now discovered that they'd viciously and quite vindictively neglected to stock up on the very size that would have temporarily filled a vacuum in my pathetic consumer-driven existence?

(Beat.)

I told him the only thing I could tell him.

JACK

Which was?

RACHEL

I said, "Nothing's wrong." And then I burst into tears.

JACK

You did what?

RACHEL

I started crying – I couldn't help it.

JACK

Over the jacket?

RACHEL

(With irritation.)

No, not over the jacket.

JACK

Well what then? Are you depressed?

RACHEL

No...not as far as I know. I just...He was just...

(Pause.)

JACK

Oh, well thank you. Thank you for allaying my fears; that explains everything. I'm glad you've been able put my mind at rest. Now, if you wouldn't mind just skimming over what happened in the intervening eight hours between then and now, I'd say we could safely describe this evening as having been a resounding success, don't you?

RACHEL

(With a smile.)

Oh, poor Jack, I must sound completely bonkers right now, mustn't I? This must all sound so peculiar. But if you'd been there, if you'd...*felt* the way he looked at you – the way he looked at me – you'd have understood. I know you would.

JACK

So you keep saying.

RACHEL

And when he took my hand, I–

JACK

He did what?

RACHEL

Took my hand. He reached out and took my hand and held it in his, and...and when he did, I–