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*TERE drinks.*

TERE: I don't know what they asked you to do today, Samuel. But René's gone AWOL and Olivia's run off into the field. Onto that patch of wasteground or whatever it is we have out there. And it's getting dark now.

SAMUEL: Were you able to talk to her?

TERE: She ran off, didn't say a word. But you're not worried, are you. I'm the one to blame... Is that what you think?

SAMUEL: No, Tere.

TERE: Could I not just have keep my mouth shut? Do I have to have a whisky and let it all out?

SAMUEL: It was her decision.

TERE: She can't make decisions.

SAMUEL: She'll have to learn, then.

TERE: You don't know her.

SAMUEL: What's the worst that could happen?

TERE: I dread to think.

SAMUEL: Would it be better for her to stay here?

TERE: 'Here'? What is 'here' to you? This is an office, Samuel. It's an office, like any other. *(Pause.)* I thought you were coming here to help her. To help her to stick it out. To help us to live with her.

SAMUEL: Olivia will move on.

TERE: How can you be so sure?

SAMUEL: She'll make a success of it.

TERE: I've been working at this agency for thirty years. People like her don't get past the first minute of an interview.

SAMUEL: I've seen lots of people...

TERE: What?

SAMUEL: Change.

TERE: Right. Start from scratch. They're very appealing, those stories of liberation. So appealing, they ought to be banned. All of them! Is that the world you imagine? Everyone telling their little story, about how they changed their own lives? Someone has to do some work. That's what I say. Or do you not work? Are you not getting paid for being here? Or have they paid you to convince her to leave?

SAMUEL: Don't you dare insinuate that.

TERE: At least tell me this is a job to you, Samuel. Something you have to do. The thing that pays your bills. You must have a home, a family to support.

SAMUEL: It was her decision.

TERE: But you've got a child, haven't you? I've seen the booster seat in your car. *(Pause.)* What do you do when it has a tantrum? Chuck it out the window so it sheds its fear?

*Silence.*

You know what I used to do with my children? I used to cry with them. And if ever they screamed like mad things, I used to scream even more, until they ended up consoling me. It was the same with my father. When he used to come home drunk, tripping over everything... my brothers and sisters went on sleeping; they didn't even notice... And my mother just stayed in bed and insulted him from there, 'Are you drunk again?' But what did I do? I'd come out of my room and I'd drink with him. 'Come on, Dad, another whisky.' As if I liked whisky back then. I wasn't even fifteen yet... *(Drinks.)* And then he'd tell me all his sorrows. What a bad father he was. And I'd dream up problems of my own, Samuel, even bigger ones, so he wouldn't feel alone. And one more drink. And another one, until he fell asleep. Everyone tried to cure him, but me, I was the only one who did anything for him. But those were different times. Do you know what the fashion is now? Telling the truth. And telling people to piss off, 'Go on, cope with it on your own'. We don't know how to keep people company any more. Look: for three years I've wanted to go on The Voice.

SAMUEL: The Voice?

TERE: The TV show. And I can't find anyone to go to the bloody audition with me. And that says it all. They only have to come to the studio... and hold my hand for a bit. I'm the one bloody singing. My kids say to me, 'Mum, what are you gonna to do at your age? Become a pop star, now?' They say I've got enough with karaoke. Fucking karaoke... I wanted to take singing seriously, Samuel. But they've told me so many times I've got no talent... Maybe if they'd lied to me I'd have believed in myself. *(Pause.)* I couldn't bring myself to do that for Olivia. I remember now: her grey man.

SAMUEL: What's that?

TERE: Her anxiety. Her therapist told her to picture it, her anxiety, outside of herself, in her head, like a grey man arriving with a briefcase and sitting next to her to pester her. Every time she has an attack, the poor thing says 'Now my grey man's arrived', and I always pretend I can't hear her. I should have said 'Let him in'. Put a plate of food down for him on the table, a slice of tortilla like for everyone else.

*Pause.*

Do you have someone who lies to you, Samuel? Someone who tells you how useful you are, doing this shit that you do?