

Wordcount: 1574

JOINT

JACOB - aged 24

JULIA - aged 57

The back garden of a London townhouse. The hour is unclear.

The house is seen at the back of the stage. The kitchen inside is visible through two large windows and the back door. JULIA sits in one of three scattered garden chairs, dressed in a silk dressing gown and slippers. Her hair is tied back and she has on only a touch of lipstick. She is occasionally taking drags from a cigarette. An overflowing ashtray sits on the garden table close to her side. JACOB can be seen walking around inside the kitchen. He shrugs on a big leather coat. He shoulders his way out the back door. When he sees JULIA he stops, hesitant.

Jacob: You've been out here a while.

Julia: Not too long.

Jacob: It's been at least an hour.

Julia: Oh, you're finally making use of the watch I bought you?

JACOB ignores her, moving towards the chair furthest from JULIA. He sits down and pulls a lighter and what looks like a cigarette out of his pocket.

It hasn't. Been an hour. What does it matter?

Jacob: Must have been chaining them.

Julia: I'm distracted and let the ash build up. Gets all over me. Probably only smoke half.

Pause.

Don't lecture me please.

JACOB has been struggling to get the lighter to work. JULIA watches him get frustrated before offering him hers. He lights up, sticks his hand in his pocket and takes a long drag.

I want that back. You've stolen all of mine.

Jacob: Yeah.

Julia: Tell me next time you run out. So I know when to get more.

JULIA waits for a response. When she doesn't get one she looks away. they sit for a long moment smoking in silence. JACOB goes to flick ash onto the ground.

Julia: Jake.

Jacob: Huh? Oh sorry.

JACOB stands and reaches across her to get to the ashtray before sitting back down.

Julia: That stuff smells stronger. I don't like it.

Jacob: Nah it's good, Ben brought it back from Amsterdam.

Julia: Wouldn't have guessed.

Jacob: Better than the last lot.

Julia: Right.

Pause.

It's just it stinks up the house. So if you wouldn't mind.

Jacob: I don't smoke it in my room.

Julia: I know/

Jacob: I close the back door. Stop it getting/

Julia: Okay.

Jacob: So then.

They sit in silence. JACOB schools his face into a warmer, apologetic expression.

Jacob: Sorry, I'll try not to. Next time I'll...

Julia: It's alright.

Beat.

Jacob: Actually I was gonna ask.

JULIA looks at him then raises her brow.

Julia: Really? Already?

Jacob: I don't know, Yeah. Nearly.

Julia: You're smoking so much Jake.

Jacob: Don't start.

Julia: Look, if I'm the one paying for/

Jacob: I get it.

Julia: Because I don't have to/

Jacob: I get it.

Julia: Do you?

Jacob: You won't let me forget!

Pause.

Julia: This is the last time for now, okay? And you'll go to the job centre tomorrow?

Jacob: Yes.

Julia: Because I can't just keep/

Jacob: Yes! I'll fucking go.

Julia: Hey!

Jacob: What?

Julia: (*Looking at JACOB like she cannot understand what he is thinking*) Why do you have to do that?

Jacob: (*Sighing, exasperated*) What.

Julia: There, like that.

Jacob: I didn't do anything.

Julia: You just sighed. Like I'm stupid. Like you think I'm stupid.

Jacob: Oh for fuck sake. You're delusional.

Julia: Don't talk to me like that. I'm your mother.

Pause.

You're still my boy. I don't know how you can be so hateful.

Jacob: I don't hate you.

Julia: Well you don't respect me. Because I'm not him.

Jacob: Oh come on.

Julia: Caroline says I'm too lenient with you. That you don't show me respect. After I do so much/

Jacob: Great. That's fucking great. Now you're talking about me to your fucking therapist too? Is that what you're telling me? You need to go to a shrink to know how to cope with me?

Julia: She is helping me with... yes.

Jacob: Is that a joke? I should just leave then? You want me out? Would you like to be completely alone?

Julia: Jacob, no, don't be stupid.

Jacob: I'm not fucking stupid. Don't call me stupid.

Julia: Hang on, you're not being fair.

Jacob: (*Louder*) What's fair mum? What am I supposed to think?

Julia: Please. Can we just not? For once, can we not argue?

Jacob: (*Settling down*) I just wanted a smoke.

Julia: We can't keep moving around each other in there, never speaking. I'm not just leaving you cash on the kitchen table. I'm not waiting to hear the front door slam as my only indication you're still alive.

Jacob: Don't be dramatic.

Julia: I worry about you.

Jacob: Well don't.

Julia: How? I'm on my own now. I don't know how to help you.

Jacob: We can't.

Julia: Can't what?

Jacob: Help each other.

JULIA looks for a moment like she might protest before sitting back and looking away.

Julia: Okay so maybe you won't listen to me. (*Turning back towards JACOB*) God knows you don't talk to me. But there are people-

Jacob: Stop it.

Julia: (*Reaching out to him*) Sweetheart.

Jacob: Mum, Stop! Alright?

Julia: What? What.

Jacob: Would you quit getting involved? Telling me what to do. I can't bare it anymore. You just go on at me. On and on and/

JULIA pointedly turns her head and crosses her legs away from him. She goes to take a drag from her cigarette but she sees it has gone out. She fumbles for another one. Without looking she motions for JACOB to pass her the lighter. After lighting up she tosses the lighter down on the table.

Beat.

Julia: You came out here with an agenda too, let's not forget. (*Looking at JACOB*) I guess I was wrong before, you do talk, when you need something.

Jacob: What would you have us talk about mum? Huh? What, you want us to sit and eat dinner together and... gossip? Or have me listen to you moan about the weed when you're sat out here puffing away on those menthols like they might ban them tomorrow.

Julia: Well actually, they're saying in march next year...

Jacob: I don't talk to you mum. Because all I can hear is how yours is the only other voice in that house.

Beat.

Julia: You could ask me how I am.

Jacob: You'd tell me anyway. You share a lot.

Julia: We could talk about him. How you're feeling. If you'd like.

Beat.

Jacob: Why do you?

Julia: What?

Jacob: Why do you pay for it? If you'll only use that against me?

Julia: What? I- I'm. I don't. Jake I wouldn't.

Jacob: I feel like that's what you're doing.

Julia: No, no/

Jacob: So why?

Julia: What?

Jacob: Why do you keep lending me...

Julia: *(Pause)* It's easier to give you money than spend hours fighting with you. That's energy I don't have.

Pause.

Julia: Because otherwise I'm scared, I'm scared that you'll...

Jacob: *(Looks up sharply)* You're scared of me?

Julia: No not scared of you. For you? For me? I don't know.

Jacob: God! Why aren't you sick of me? You put up with me, why haven't you kicked me out already? Why don't you just tell me to fuck off?

Julia: Because I love you.

Jacob: No, no. Mum come on, we get in the way of each other. I make you upset.

Julia: *(Sitting on the edge of her chair as though she wants to reach out to him)* That's why you need to talk to me Jake. It's something, you know, we can share. That no one else understands/

Jacob: But it's not even the same for us! It's not. I don't wake up every day and miss your husband.

Julia: I know that, I know that.

Jacob: I, I- miss/

JACOB rubs hard at his eyes with one hand. Beat.

He was who I am supposed to be. (*Suddenly standing up, bringing his hands up by his head*) But I needed him to tell me how.

Julia: (*Reaching for him*) Darling/

Jacob: I can't. I don't know what he wants me to do. (*Slowing down. Pause*) I don't know what to do.

JULIA places a hand on the seat next to her. Without looking, JACOB moves and sits down. She moves her hand just in time.

Jacob: He was better than me.

Julia: (*Turning back to JACOB*) Hey now...

Jacob: Better than everyone.

Julia: He wasn't perfect/

Jacob: Fuck, how did he make everything seem okay, like it was nothing?

Pause.

I mean imagine finding out you're going to die and you start making your own funeral playlist.

JULIA pauses, then laughs. Suddenly she starts laughing hard and JACOB looks at her.

Jacob: (*Smiling slightly*) 9 hours long.

JACOB breaks off shaking his head. Soon they are both laughing, almost hysterically.

JACOB suddenly pushes his head into her chest and sobs. JULIA, initially startled, carefully holds an arm around him. They sit like that for a long moment. JACOB'S breath begins to even out. With her other hand, JULIA takes the joint out of his loose grip and brings it to her lips. JACOB moves his head up to push it against her shoulder. He gives a small huff of amusement. JULIA starts to slowly stroke his hair.

