

Lights up on **Mary, Joe and John.** They're sitting at a table, with a cloth on it. They've just finished supper. **John** is drunk. There's a bottle of whisky next to him and a glass at his elbow. The atmosphere is strained.

Mary That was nice, wasn't it?

Silence.

Being together. As a family.

Silence.

Joe Can I go out now?

Mary Just sit here . . . a few minutes. That's all.

Joe Why?

Mary I'm trying – A family should – we should eat together –

Joe We just have. Can I go now?

Mary It's important.

Joe We never did this when Dan was alive. Why do we have to do it now?

Mary Tell him, John.

John Tell him what?

Mary Why we need to sit down together once a day as a family.

John Let him go if he wants to.

Joe Thanks, Dad.

He goes. Mary gets up to clear the table.

John Sit down.

Mary I'm just –

John Sit down –

She does so. He fiddles around in his pocket and brings out a piece of paper.

She looks at him, afraid. He takes a large slug of whisky.

John Were you actually going to send this?

Mary I –

John Because it's mad, this is the sort of thing a mad person does –

Mary I'm entitled to madness.

John No, no, please don't do this.

Mary I have no illusions about it. I'm not expecting closure, whatever the hell that is, I'm not expecting to move on anywhere –

John You were actually going to send it?

Mary I – yes – I –

John What were you expecting her to say? Sorry?

Mary For God's sake, John, d'you want to keep running for the rest of your life –

John I've stopped running.

Mary You're getting through four bottles of whisky a week! You're still running away. I can't tell if you're running from it or me, you're never sober enough to tell me! I used to get into bed and you'd set off round the block for a jog and come back

three hours later. Now I get into bed and you're downstairs in front of the telly with a bottle of whisky —

John While you're up there writing love letters to a murderer —

Mary Oh don't talk crap, you know nothing, you understand *nothing* —

John *hits her across the face. She hits him back. They've never hit each other before. They both reel.* **Joe** *appears.*

Joe I forgot my — What happened?

John and Mary *are both in tears.*

John Nothing. It's over.

He goes to Mary.

John Sorry. I'm so sorry.

Joe What did you do?

Mary We — nothing — there was a disagreement —

John I hit her. I hit her. I'm sorry.

Joe Jesus Christ, Dad, what's happening? What are you doing to each other?

Mary It's OK —

Joe It's not OK! D'you want to know what's happened? The most important person in this house, the person behind every thought, every impulse, every daydream or screaming match, is Danny. A dead person. A dead person is in charge of our lives.

Mary Joe —

Joe Why don't you ask me what I want occasionally? Go on, ask me. I'll tell you. I'd like to be considered as important as my little brother, who happens to be dead. I'd like parity with the stiff, if that's not too much to ask. In fact, I'll go further than that. I'd like be considered *more* important. Because the great thing about me is that I'm actually breathing, which

I think gives me the edge over a kilo and a half of ash sitting in a tub on the kitchen shelf.

Silence.

Or maybe you disagree?

John *tries to speak, but can't.*

John I — I — that's not —

He turns away and goes out.

Joe What is his problem?

Mary Leave him alone, Joe, please.

Pause.

Joe What happened?

Mary He found a letter I wrote to Emma Price. He thinks I want to forgive her or something.

Joe Do you?

Mary I don't know what I want.

Pause.

I want to be free.

Joe Of what?

Mary As long as I'm shackled to her I'm shackled to Danny's murder, and he was more than that. He was more than just a violent death.

Joe So what are you going to do about it?

Mary I thought you were going out? Go on, you need to get out of here —

Joe Why did he hit you?

Mary I hit him back, by the way.

Joe You've never hit each other. Ever.

Mary He's trying to deal with Danny being killed his way, and I'm trying to deal with it my way. And the problem is, my way makes him want to kill me, too.

Blackout.

Lights up on Emma and Elizabeth. Emma is holding a letter which Elizabeth has just handed over.

Emma Who's it from?

Elizabeth Mary Pritchard.

Emma Who's she?

Elizabeth Daniel Pritchard's mother. I told you about her.
A beat.

Emma What does she want?

Elizabeth Why don't you read it and see?

Emma No thanks.

She tries to hand it back to Elizabeth.

Elizabeth It's addressed to you. Keep it. You might want to read it later.

Emma I won't.

Elizabeth Keep it anyway.

Emma What does she want?

Elizabeth Why don't you read the letter?

Emma Why don't you tell me?

Elizabeth She asked me to give it to you.

Emma I don't want it.

Elizabeth Is that what you'd like me to tell her?