

11. Parent Scene 3.

Mani is strapped to a chair.

The lights come on slowly. The first light is the intense red of the hot kettle element.

Quiet.

Dad You call that a faulty kettle element?

He is holding it high in an out-stretched arm a short distance away from Mani. He has on a heavy, leather glove .

I wouldn't. Not this close to a man's face. **(Wait.)** I got it stripped down. There's nothing to a kettle. I plug it in... straight off.... bingo ! The hairs on the back of my arm.... burnt off. My hand's locked by now. I'm good with pain. It's the training. I've done spot-welding. Hence the glove.

Mum comes in with the tray, a biscuit on each saucer. She puts the tray down near Dad, turns on the tv and sits in the second chair.

Dad **(To Mum. Interrogating.)** How've you boiled that water? **(No reply.)** I've got the kettle element here in my hand. How did you boil it?

Mum **(Snapping a biscuit.)** I used the milk pan.

Quiet.

The tv plays. It is BLESS THIS HOUSE with Sid James.

Mum Has he spoken yet?

Dad He will.

Mum Why did he come? What was his idea? He can't have come to tell us he'd physically abused a grandson we've never met. It makes no sense. **(Wait.)** You'll have to burn him.

Quiet. No movement.

Dad I don't know why I'm holding it. My arms locked. **(Wait.)** It isn't pretty. But it was a valid idea. I'm sure you see that.

Mum O, don't go on. Give it me. I'll teach him to mistreat children. Which hand was it that hit my grandchild?

She goes for the element. It almost touches her as Dad moves to avoid her taking it. He drops the element and its glow dies. He has a sudden cramp as his arm comes out of the lock. He cries out and folds his arm. As he does so....

Mum The carpet! The carpet!
Dad My arm.
Mum You'll have the whole house in flames.
Dad Don't tempt me.
Mum I can smell it. The carpet's burning. It smells like burning flesh.
Dad That'll be the dust.
Mum What do you mean "dust"? I vac twice a day.
Dad In the pile. It's unavoidable.
Mum It is not unavoidable !
Dad **(To his son)** Here we go.
Mum If I had a decent cleaner....
Dad **(Shouting. Final.)** We are not having a bloody BAGLESS cleaner in this house! Clear?

Quiet.
She snaps a biscuit.
The glow has gone.

Mani Please. Tea.

They look at him. Then each other.

Mum I'm not getting it.
Dad I've some left.
Mum It'll be cold.

Dad goes to him. It is the first time that it is clear that Mani is tied. He cannot move his hands. They are tied behind his back. Dad has to hold the cup to his mouth. Mani drinks. He dribbles. Dad looks at Mum. She goes for a hanky. Wipes Mani's chin. She kisses him and then walks quickly away.

Mani Thankyou.
Dad I bet you're starving.
Mani No.
Mum You look like you've been eating out of bins.
Mani No.
Mum You admit you stink, of course ?
Mani I don't smell of bleach. Or flowers.

Quiet.

Mum You must tell us. About our grandson. We don't know why you won't tell us... after telling us.....

Dad **(Blunt. Blurting.)** Have you killed our lad?
Mani No ! **(Quiet.)** I'm a stone. And a fire. And a stupid happy pup. Where is my rage from? Where is this from? I cradle a child.... and I have to shake it....

Mum You shook him!
Mani I have to stroke his velvet skin. And I have to damage him.
Mum Damage ! **(To Dad)** Did you hear?
Mani **(Angering. To Mum.)** Stop it!
Mum Don't you use that tone.... I wouldn't even take that off your father.
Mani One day it'll stop. You will stop. And it might be because your heart seizes. Or you could suddenly want to know.....
(Stumbling.) why the things.... that... that make you up.....
(He has lost the thought.)

Quiet.

Mum and Dad share a look. It is necessary to act.

Mum I have never understood a word he said.
Dad He's taking the piss.
Mani **(Still struggling.)** Why the things that.... make you up....are fallen through..... to piles of fluff and dust.....
Mum I blame that Art teacher.
Dad Ideas!
Mum Ideas above him....
Dad You've always chased discontent.... I don't know why. Was it us?
Mum ... they got there and you didn't have the brains to get 'em out....
Mani **(Still stumbling.)** Yes. Yes. It was you....
Mum You cheeky bugger!
Dad You've always had a big head.
Mum ... full of stupidity.
Dad You're beyond your mother and me....
Mum I could slap him....
Dad Isn't that a terrible thing....
Mum He's a burglar!
Dad "Beyond" your parents....
Mum come to steel our peace of mind.
Dad I'm ashamed to say it...
Mum My son's a terrorist! A mental terrorist!

She throws her cup at him. It hits him on the temple and the tea spills down him. She jumps up and grabs Dad's cup and the one Mani had drunk from. She smashes them together a few inches in front of his face. The tea splatters him.

Mani **(Struggling.)** Please.
Mum O, we didn't like that did we? **(To Dad.)** He didn't like that.
Dad **(Going for the kettle element.)** He won't like this.
Mani I'm sorry. Sorry.

Mum goes off. She returns with the full washing up bowl. She puts it down in front of him. Throughout the following he is pleading and crying. The sound of breaking is a terror to him.

Dad has pliers and wire. He is trying to fix the element.

Dad It's not lost. Don't you worry. I'll make it work. Make it work!

He is fiddling intensely. It glows momentarily.... but spends more time just sparking. When it sparks he receives a shock.... which stills him for a painful moment... but doesn't stop him.

At the same time Mum smashes plates, cups, dishes together in front of his face. He cries with each smash.

O'Toole (In the garden.) He had me "planted". In the garden. Awaiting the call. I confess... I had fallen asleep. Under a canopy of hardy perennial lily-white flowered clematis. The summer sound of garden feat crockery-smash brought me round. And through the triple-glaze and my own eye's glazey sleep... I viewed a mound of broken pot. In all the world is there a china line still left unbroken?

The house.

Mani is covered in broken pot. It is in a pile that covers his feet and up to the arms of the chair so that only his shoulders, head and the back of the chair can be seen. His face is covered in china dust.

Mum is looking through the pile for pieces that she can break still smaller. She does so. She has a small toffee hammer. She breaks the pieces in her hand.

Dad stands. Eureka! He has made the ancient element work. It is still sparking, but glowing red.

O'Toole bursts into the room. He is holding a puny stick from the garden above his head. He is close to Mum. Mum raises her toffee hammer.

Dad lunges forward with the kettle element. It sparks magnificently.

O'Toole is electrocuted through the chest. He falls. His body smokes.

Black.