



# The Real Estate

Freddie Machin



## Characters

### THE RESIDENTS

NATALIE WHITEMAN, *chair of the tenants' association, forty-nine*

TOMMY WHITEMAN, *Natalie's son, seventeen*

FRANK, *tenants' association member, seventy*

DUNCAN, *tenants' association member, twenty-three*

ESTHER, *tenants' association member, thirty-five*

DANIELLE WHITEMAN, *Natalie's daughter, twenty-three*

RUBY, *Danielle's best friend, runs a dance class, twenty-three*

MARIA, *a former resident, twenty-three*

WARREN, *a resident, thirty-two*

### VISITORS TO THE ESTATE

ROBERTA, *local councillor, thirty-two*

TAMARA, *news presenter, twenty-six*

JOHN, *news crew cameraman, twenty-eight*

CARL, *journalist, twenty-five*

### ON THE PRODUCTION

ED, *actor playing the journalist killed by Ingrid, twenty-five*

FLORENCE, *the actor playing Ingrid, twenty-three*

ELIZABETH, *a hugely celebrated actor playing DCI Lane, fifty*

SIOBHAN, *the actor playing Annie, twenty-three*

JACK, *the actor playing Leonard, twenty-three*

JUDE, *the actor playing Frank, twenty-three*

CHARLOTTE, *first assistant director, twenty-one*

JEREMY, *the director, thirty-eight*

SOPHIA, *the producer, thirty-three*

REBECCA, *screenwriter, thirty*

DAVE, *the sound guy, thirty*

SHEILA, *director of photography, thirty*

SUZIE, *clapper loader, twenty-two*

TYRONE, *security, twenty-five*

TIM, *runner, twenty*

KERRY, *hair and make-up, twenty-three*

### CHARACTERS IN THE FILM *GIANT KILLER*

ALISON, *the architect of Hawksmoor House, twenty-seven*

LEONARD WHITEMAN, *new resident and Natalie's father, twenty-three*

ANNIE WHITEMAN, *new resident and Natalie's mother, twenty-three*

YOUNG FRANK, *new resident, twenty-three*

VIOLET, *Ingrid's neighbour, twenty-three*

INGRID, *Annie's best friend, the film's protagonist, twenty-three*

MR COOPER, *Ingrid's landlord, thirty*  
DSU MCCAIN, *detective superintendent, fifty-three*  
DCI PARKER, *detective, twenty-five*  
DCI LANE, *detective, fifty*

*Various production crew and residents*

### **Note on Play**

*( / ) denotes an interruption.*

*Pause, beat, and silence refer to the quality of pause rather than its length.*

*Giant Killer film script is written in this font.*

## Scene 1: Tenants' Association Meeting One

*In darkness, FRANK enters the community centre. He crosses the hall and turns on the kitchen light offstage. As he potters around the kitchen, he begins to sing 'The Way You Look Tonight'. He comes back into the hall, which is still in darkness, except for the light that spills from the kitchen.*

FRANK *sings the second verse of 'The Way You Look Tonight'.*

*But he is interrupted by a vision of himself and ANNIE WHITEMAN in this room almost fifty years ago. They are dancing together. YOUNG FRANK takes over the song, singing the third verse.*

*The memory disintegrates and FRANK finds he is breathing heavily. He stumbles to a chair and sits down, controlling his breathing.*

*The lights flicker on. NATALIE and TOMMY enter with shopping bags. There is a sign on the wall which reads 'Hawksmoor House Community Centre'.*

NATALIE. I'll see if the urn's working. Do you want tea?

TOMMY. No thanks. Evening, Frank.

NATALIE. Why are you sitting there in the dark, Frank? You alright, love?

*She gives him a kiss on the cheek.*

There's money in the meter you know. God, it's freezing in here.

FRANK. Is Danielle coming tonight?

NATALIE. Has your sister text you, Tommy?

TOMMY. Yeah.

NATALIE. Is she coming?

TOMMY. No.

NATALIE. Why not?

TOMMY. Dunno.

NATALIE. Didn't you ask her?

TOMMY. She's never been to a meeting in her life, why would she come to this one?

NATALIE. Because I asked her to, that's why.

FRANK. She's just like her grandmother.

NATALIE. Will you text her please and find out where she is.

*NATALIE disappears into the kitchen. TOMMY wanders up onto the stage and turns on the PA.*

NATALIE *(off)*. You didn't switch the urn on, Frank. We'll have everyone gasping for a cup of tea. Tommy, will you bring that bag through please, it's got the tea stuff in it.

Tommy.

TOMMY. –

NATALIE (*off*). Tommy, if you're turning that microphone on / you can

TOMMY (*into mic*). A very good evening, ladies and gentlemen, thank you all for coming out tonight. You know the rules by now. Cash prizes will be awarded. Eyes down for a full house.

NATALIE (*off*). Tommy.

TOMMY. Buckle my shoe – forty-two.

NATALIE (*off*). Tommy, can you hear me?

TOMMY (*into mic*). Tommy, can you hear me? Thirty-three.

NATALIE (*off*). Can you put some chairs out please?

TOMMY (*into mic*). That'll be a no then – seventy-seven.

NATALIE *comes over to* TOMMY.

NATALIE. Esther's running late as well, it'll be me you and Frank at this rate. Are the biscuits in your bag?

TOMMY (*into mic*). Where did I put those bourbons /

NATALIE *pulls the plug on the PA*.

Number six.

NATALIE *rifles through the plastic bag that TOMMY brought in*. TOMMY *gets the chairs out*.

NATALIE. You gonna give us a song later, Frank?

FRANK. Not tonight.

NATALIE. Esther said you weren't feeling very well.

FRANK. I never do any more.

NATALIE. Why don't you go back to bed?

FRANK. I wouldn't get up if I did.

NATALIE. You're not that old.

FRANK. No Danielle tonight then?

NATALIE. No.

FRANK. She's too popular. Just like Annie was. Chatting to everyone in the pub, she could light up any room she walked in to.

NATALIE. If you start crying again, Frank, I'll send you home.

FRANK. I'll stay for a bit.

NATALIE. Here, have a biscuit.

FRANK. Seeing as it's the last one.

NATALIE. The last one what?

FRANK. Meeting.

NATALIE. Who told you it was the last one?

FRANK. Danielle was in the pub this afternoon, chatting to everyone. Said it was gonna be the last meeting.

NATALIE. And what the fuck does she know about it?

*Enter DUNCAN.*

DUNCAN. You haven't started, have you?

TOMMY. Not yet.

FRANK. Duncan.

NATALIE. You alright, Duncan?

DUNCAN. No I'm not. The carer was late.

NATALIE. What, again?

DUNCAN. Took me forever to get Mum ready for bed.

FRANK. You shouldn't have to do it on your own, it's not right.

DUNCAN. Any biscuits? I'm starving.

NATALIE. Have you seen her today?

DUNCAN. Who?

NATALIE. Danielle.

DUNCAN. No.

TOMMY. Why would Duncan have seen her? He doesn't leave the house.

DUNCAN. Thanks, mate.

NATALIE. What time did you see her, Frank? Was she drinking?

FRANK. Half-two, it was.

NATALIE. Fuck's sake. She should have been in work. What did she say to you?

FRANK. Just that. That it was the last one.

DUNCAN. The last one what?

NATALIE. What did she say in that text?

TOMMY. –

NATALIE. Oi.

TOMMY. What?

NATALIE. Give me your phone.

TOMMY. Fuck off.

NATALIE. Give me your phone now, let me see it.

*She wrestles with him for the phone.*

TOMMY. No! Fuck off.

DUNCAN. Is the urn on?

FRANK. Looks like it's the last meeting, Duncan.

DUNCAN. What? But why? It can't be the last one. Why?

*But TOMMY won't give in.*

NATALIE. It's not. Go and check on the urn.

DUNCAN. Has something happened? With the property developers?

NATALIE. There's a sandwich in the kitchen.

Duncan.

DUNCAN. Has it?

NATALIE. Sandwich. In the kitchen.

DUNCAN *goes.*

FRANK. Where's Esther?

NATALIE. She's running late. Tommy!

TOMMY. What?

NATALIE. Can you get the rest of the chairs out please?

*Enter ESTHER.*

ESTHER. Sorry I'm late. Sorry! That fucking bus. Hello, Natalie. Hello, boys.

NATALIE. You're not late, the urn isn't hot yet.

ESTHER. It's broken.

NATALIE. Since when?

ESTHER. I brought some toffee vodka instead. So sad. I can't believe it's the last session.

Feel like we should light a candle, or smash the place up or something. Funny innit.

NATALIE. Who told you?

ESTHER. Who told me what?

NATALIE. That it was going to be the last meeting.

ESTHER. I thought everyone knew.

*Enter DUNCAN.*

DUNCAN. The urn's not working.

ESTHER. Any glasses?

FRANK. Might as well throw it out if it's the last session.

ESTHER. What?

FRANK. The urn.

NATALIE. Hold on a fucking minute. Why does everyone think it's the last session?

*Beat.*

ESTHER. Oh.

NATALIE. What?

DUNCAN (*vodka*). Pass it here then.

ESTHER. Didn't they email you?

NATALIE. Who?

ESTHER. They said they'd email you.

DUNCAN. It's already open.

ESTHER. I had a bit on the bus. We was crawling down the Commercial Road for an hour, like you wouldn't believe. It's so nice.

NATALIE. Right. Everybody stop where you are. Get the fucking glasses, Duncan, and come and sit down.

DUNCAN *goes for glasses.*

*Silence while DUNCAN pours. They drink.*

ESTHER. Ooh, so nice.

NATALIE. Now will somebody please tell me what's going on.

ESTHER. Maria and Chris.

NATALIE. What about them?

ESTHER. They got a letter.

NATALIE. From who?

ESTHER. –

NATALIE. From who?

TOMMY. Who do you think?

NATALIE. I've got no idea, Tommy, because nobody tells me anything.

ESTHER. From the council...

NATALIE. Saying what?

ESTHER. Offering them... you know... relocation. Alternative housing.

NATALIE. And that's what you heard from Danielle, is it, Frank?

FRANK. People were talking about it in the pub.

NATALIE. So why aren't they here?

ESTHER. –

NATALIE. At the meeting. I'm sure they're not the only ones to get a letter. Where are they?

*Pause.*

ESTHER. They moved out.

DUNCAN. What the fuck?

ESTHER. Last night. I thought everyone knew!

DUNCAN. Where to?

ESTHER. Becontree.

DUNCAN. Where's that?

ESTHER. Dagenham.

TOMMY. That's fucking bullshit.

ESTHER. That's why everyone thought it was the last meeting.

NATALIE. Why didn't you know about this, Duncan?

ESTHER. He doesn't get out much.

DUNCAN. Shut up, Esther.

ESTHER. I didn't mean it nasty.

FRANK. Leave him alone.

ESTHER. Alright, don't shoot the fucking messenger!

NATALIE (*to TOMMY*). Did Danielle tell you?

TOMMY. Not exactly, but kind of...

NATALIE. Then why the fuck didn't you tell me?

TOMMY. I didn't know they'd full-on moved out!

NATALIE. I'm meant to be the chair, why did nobody tell me?

ESTHER. She said she would email.

DUNCAN. It's alright for some innit.

*Beat.*

ESTHER. What do you mean?

DUNCAN. They can come and go as they please. What am I gonna do? What if the provision is totally different in Essex? I could move out of the block and not find a single carer to help Mum.

ESTHER. I didn't mean to upset you, Duncan.

DUNCAN. Who do they think they are? They can't just move to Essex without telling us.

TOMMY. Dagenham's London.

DUNCAN. It's ten minutes from Romford. It's Essex. It's miles away.

ESTHER. It's their choice, why shouldn't they go?

NATALIE. We said that we'd discuss everything. That's the whole point of having a fucking committee, we have to discuss it otherwise the residents aren't represented.

ESTHER. I know, but /

NATALIE. Ninety-three out of one hundred and seven people that live on this estate said that they did not want to leave.

DUNCAN. And now we know who the ones that didn't vote are, coz Maria and Chris have scarpered quicker than...

TOMMY. Speedy Gonzales.

ESTHER. I know, but we also said, as soon as the first person gets offered a new house / that we'd

DUNCAN. That we'd discuss it and decide what to do – how can we discuss it if they've already gone?

*Silence.*

NATALIE. So that's it, is it? We have our little party and give up? Give up on our block of flats? On our homes?

ESTHER. I don't know, Natalie.

NATALIE. Why did you even come in the first place?

ESTHER. Because we thought we could do it, but /

NATALIE. Do what?

ESTHER. Change something.

NATALIE. Change what though, Esther?

ESTHER. Stop them selling off the block. But if Maria and Chris don't even think it's gonna happen then what good / is us doing anything.

NATALIE. Is Maria a member of the fucking council?

*Beat.*

TOMMY. Alright, Mum.

ESTHER. –

NATALIE. Is Chris a fucking board member at Prospect Development?

TOMMY. Calm down.

NATALIE. Shut up, Tommy.

Now that you've all pissed on my parade, I got a letter as well.

TOMMY. From the council?

DUNCAN. Have you opened it?

NATALIE. No, I brought it here to discuss it with you bunch of...

TOMMY. Douchebags.

NATALIE. Cowards.

But there's no point now is there.

DUNCAN. Can't hurt to read it. See what they offered you.

NATALIE. Why, you gonna change your mind, are you, Duncan?

DUNCAN. Nobody's quit, Natalie, so I don't know why you're giving it the Charlie-Big-Potatoes. We're all still here. Listening to you have a go at everyone.

*Pause.*

NATALIE. Someone else read it.

*TOMMY takes the letter and slowly opens it.*

TOMMY (*reads*). Dear Mrs Whiteman, great news! We have changed our minds about selling your block of flats /

ESTHER. What?

NATALIE. If you're gonna fuck about /

TOMMY. Alright, alright, / I'll do it.

ESTHER. I thought he was serious then!

*He starts again.*

TOMMY. In light of the recent sale of Hawksmoor House to an independent property developer, we can now offer you alternative council accommodation as detailed below... blah blah blah... two-up, two-down terraced house, a short walk from the seafront. The property has a small garden to the rear.

ESTHER. The seafront?

DUNCAN. Where is it?

TOMMY. Clacton.

FRANK. That's Essex.

NATALIE. Tommy, get me the microphone.

*He does.*

Now that those two have stolen my thunder it sort of ruins the surprise, doesn't it, but I'm gonna say it anyway.

*TOMMY holds the mic up to NATALIE, she leans into it.*

I'm not fucking going.

*TOMMY takes the mic away.*

*Beat.*

ESTHER. Nice picture of the garden there.

FRANK. I love the seaside.

*NATALIE tears up the letter.*

*Silence.*

The first time I ever had champagne was in this room. 1968. We moved in on the Monday and on the Friday they threw a party to celebrate. The architect lived on the top floor, she loved it so much. Everyone wanted to live here. It was a city in the sky, she said. It would last forever, and we'd live here for generations and generations. Your mum was there, Natalie. I remember it still – sweet Annie Whiteman. We danced, and laughed, and sang. And your old dad Len was there. But the less said about him the better.

NATALIE. Alright, Frank.

FRANK. All good things must come to an end.

*Pause.*

TOMMY. The filming starts tomorrow.

NATALIE. –

TOMMY. Not much we can do with a film crew taking over the estate.

ESTHER. They're using the community centre for four months they said.

NATALIE. Four weeks, Esther, four weeks.

ESTHER. We haven't got anywhere to meet then.

NATALIE. We can meet at my flat. I've already suggested that.

ESTHER. –

NATALIE. Don't you think it's even worth trying?

TOMMY. What can we do though, Mum?

NATALIE. We can get the new developers to sell the block on to better landlords. Landlords that won't raise the rent and force us out of our own homes.

ESTHER. It's not that simple though, is it, Natalie.

NATALIE. Do you want to go to Clacton?

ESTHER. No, I don't but I won't be able to afford to stay here. I might as well make a go of it somewhere else.

NATALIE. And that's it?

ESTHER. I mean... yeah.

NATALIE. What about you, Frank?

FRANK. The move would probably kill me.

NATALIE. Oh give it up. You're not dead yet.

FRANK. I don't want to move.

NATALIE. So let's do something about it then!

FRANK. –

NATALIE. Your granny lived in these flats, Tommy. Like Frank said. All those years ago. You grew up here. They can't just take that away from you. From all of us. Because oh – 'we've just decided it's worth more money than we thought so we've changed our minds.' They can't do that to people.

TOMMY. But /

NATALIE. When the council eventually do relocate us, do you think they'll find a big house for us all to live in? So we can keep our little community going? No, we'll be spread far and wide across the country. All of us. Lose our jobs, lose our friends. I'm so fucking angry, I can't understand why you're not angry.

I never said we were gonna win. I still don't think we're gonna win. But we've been meeting up every week for the past three months and I never thought we'd do that either.

We haven't got a chance in hell against a big property developer like Prospect. I know that. But I will not just walk away without discussing it with you lot first. I will not leave anybody in any doubt that we are being forced out of our homes and we do not want to leave. And if none of you are interested then I'll do it on my own.

NATALIE *walks out.*

## Scene 2: Set Building

*Saturday morning in the community centre. The chairs and tables that were scattered around the hall have been tidied away.*

*A member of the film production crew stacks the remaining chairs whilst another sweeps up. Gradually more and more crew fill the space until there are a dozen people busy clearing it of anything that denotes the twenty-first century.*

*The hall has become a set for the production. Furniture from the 1960s is brought in, as well as boxes of props, and rails full of vintage clothes. Movie lights are shifted around, flight cases, and other equipment. Walkie-talkies are used. Typewriters, ashtrays, and other vintage details build an image of 1968. The sound man hovers with a boom mic to check the level, the art director checks props, hair-and-make-up scamper back and forth. Finally the scene empties and settles to silence.*

*Enter DANIELLE and RUBY in modern-day sportswear.*

RUBY. What the actual fuck?

DANIELLE. –

RUBY. It's like the 1960s has puked up all over the hall. What the fuck, D?

DANIELLE. –

*RUBY roams around in awe of all of the vintage stuff.*

RUBY. I feel like *Doctor Who*. This is fucking insane.

DANIELLE. –

RUBY. Like where's all the chairs and the little tables and stuff gone? I'm usually breaking a sweat shifting all that shit out the way. And now the fairies have just made it disappear.

DANIELLE. –

RUBY. D?

DANIELLE. What?

RUBY. We could nick some of this stuff you know. That ashtray would look sick in your flat.

DANIELLE. Yeah.

RUBY. Nuts innit?

DANIELLE. –

RUBY. D.

DANIELLE. What?

RUBY. Why you so tight-lipped?

DANIELLE. Are we gonna start, or what?

RUBY. Start what?

DANIELLE. The class.

RUBY. Err? No. Because the community centre has turned into Austin Powers' back bedroom.

DANIELLE. What the fuck did we come for then?

RUBY. I told you the class was cancelled. Because they told me the class was cancelled. The class is cancelled.

DANIELLE. Are you scared?

RUBY. Of what?

DANIELLE. Getting caught.

RUBY. Me?

DANIELLE. Start the fucking class then.

*DANIELLE puts some music on.*

*ED FLANAGAN enters, wearing a period suit.*

RUBY. Wow.

ED. Sorry. Is this okay?

RUBY. In what sense?

ED. I mean, does it look right?

*Beat.*

RUBY. You look fine, sweetheart, but can you move in it?

ED (*moving*). Yes.

It's quite comfortable actually.

DANIELLE. Fucking hell.

*RUBY decides to fuck with him.*

RUBY. Do this for me.

*Step-ball-change. He repeats it.*

Now do this.

*Another move.*

You might feel a bit overdressed when everyone else arrives, but that's alright.

ED (*laughs awkwardly*). Yes. Are you... /

RUBY. What's your name?

ED. Ed. Ed Flanagan.

RUBY. Ed-Ed Flanagan. And you're in this film?

ED. *Giant Killer*, yes.

DANIELLE. Is that what it's called?

ED. Yes, are you /

RUBY. *Giant Killer*?

ED. Sorry I thought that this / was

RUBY. What?

ED. Isn't this the... wardrobe department?

DANIELLE. –

RUBY. Are you a big shot, Ed?

ED. What?

RUBY. Do you wanna be a superstar?

ED. Not a superstar, no but /

RUBY. Oh. He's modest. That's good.

ED. Erm, sorry I must have /

RUBY. Good thing in a man.

ED. What is?

DANIELLE/RUBY. Modesty.

ED. Oh. Thanks.

RUBY. Question is. Can he move?

ED. Can I what?

RUBY. What do you think, D?

ED. Erm...

RUBY. Does Double-Ed Flanagan here, know how to shake his thing? Can you move that behind, big boy?

ED. I don't think /

RUBY. Okay, Danielle, one task – keep your eyes on Flanagan's ba-donk a-donk donk.

*RUBY puts the music on and moves front centre in the space. She starts to lead the class.*

*CHARLOTTE, the first AD enters, holding a clipboard.*

CHARLOTTE. Hello, ladies, can I help you?

RUBY. It's alright, we're with Ed-Ed Flanagan.

CHARLOTTE. What are you looking for?

ED. Wardrobe.

CHARLOTTE. Second trailer on the left outside.

ED *scurries away*.

CHARLOTTE. What can I do for / you?

DANIELLE. You're going to have to move all of this stuff out.

CHARLOTTE. And why's that?

DANIELLE. There's been a double booking.

CHARLOTTE. What do you mean by that?

DANIELLE. We're in here every Saturday morning at nine.

CHARLOTTE. Doing what?

DANIELLE. Pottery. What does it fucking look like.

CHARLOTTE. Okay. Do you live on the estate?

RUBY. Don't look at me like that, darling, coz I'll smack that smirk right off your face.

CHARLOTTE. I wasn't looking at you like anything.

RUBY. Good, because you're eating into my hour.

CHARLOTTE. You lead the class, do you?

RUBY. Yes.

CHARLOTTE. You should have been informed /

DANIELLE. Well, we weren't.

CHARLOTTE. Letters went out to everybody three weeks ago.

DANIELLE. They never said the car park was being taken over.

CHARLOTTE. The tenants' association have been / informed

DANIELLE. I've had to park at Tesco because of you.

CHARLOTTE. I'm sorry about that / but

DANIELLE. Don't be fucking sorry, do something about it.

RUBY. We never actually agreed to you doing filming here in the first place.

DANIELLE. We were never asked.

CHARLOTTE. I'm really sorry about that but there's really nothing I can do to help you. I'm going to have to ask you ladies to / leave.

RUBY. Don't call me fucking lady, I'm nothing to you. So don't presume to even refer to me.

CHARLOTTE. I'm / sorry

DANIELLE. What's it about?

CHARLOTTE. What?

DANIELLE. The film, what's it about?

CHARLOTTE. That's confidential.

RUBY. What the fuck?

DANIELLE. No it's not.

CHARLOTTE. All of the information we are releasing at the moment is available online. You can find it all there, now if I could / just

DANIELLE. Excuse me. Don't touch her.

RUBY. Don't touch me.

CHARLOTTE. I wasn't going to.

DANIELLE. What I want to know is why I'm being forced out of my own class with no explanation. And why you think it's okay to touch us while you're doing it.

*Beat.*

CHARLOTTE. It's a film about a block of flats and the people that live / there.

DANIELLE. Is it set in the 1960s?

RUBY. Because this place looks beyond fucking retro.

CHARLOTTE. It's / set in

RUBY. Is Sheridan Smith in it?

CHARLOTTE. No.

DANIELLE. Is Idris Elba in it?

CHARLOTTE. I'm really sorry / I am

DANIELLE. Is it about gangs? Whenever they do a film on a council estate it's always got gangs in it.

RUBY. Trust.

CHARLOTTE. Look /

RUBY. She's right though.

CHARLOTTE. I have nothing to do with the story /

DANIELLE. If it's not about teenage pregnancy, and men beating up their wives, it's about gangs.

RUBY. Or zombies.

DANIELLE. Which one's this?

CHARLOTTE. I must say, I feel like a zombie myself having been here since 5.a.m.

DANIELLE. Do you think we don't have jobs to go to, is that what you're implying?

CHARLOTTE. No not at all, you must get the money to pay for your Zumba class from somewhere.

RUBY. Who said anything about Zumba?!

DANIELLE. Why don't you come along next time, you look like you could use the exercise.

*Pause. Enter TIM with a drill.*

(To TIM.) What are you looking at?

*He goes to remove the community centre sign.*

Err, what do you think you're doing?

*He stops.*

You can leave that up, thank you very much.

CHARLOTTE. Tim /

DANIELLE. No. Stop there, Tim. Put the drill down. That's it.

*He does.*

CHARLOTTE. Look. I'm sorry you weren't informed about the filming /

DANIELLE. No we weren't.

CHARLOTTE. And I know it's frustrating to have to shift your class /

DANIELLE. It is.

CHARLOTTE. But there is really nothing I can do at this stage.

DANIELLE. You can leave that sign up.

RUBY *laughs*.

You can leave that sign right where it is.

CHARLOTTE. It's really not up to me, I'm afraid, it's the decision of the art department.

DANIELLE. Do you make any of the decisions around here or what?

CHARLOTTE. There's a tea and coffee station behind the community centre, please go and help yourself to something but I will have to ask you to move off the set or I will be forced to call security.

DANIELLE. How would you like it?

RUBY. Come on, D.

DANIELLE. How would you like it?

RUBY. D, come on. We don't need the hassle.

DANIELLE. Fuck off a minute, Ruby.

How would you like it if some film crew came into your house without asking and made you look like scum? Would you agree to that?

CHARLOTTE. –

DANIELLE. Tell you what, I'm making a film about you, right. What's your name?

CHARLOTTE. –

RUBY. Felicity.

DANIELLE. Let's call you Felicity, right.

RUBY. No, no, no... Penelope!

DANIELLE. I'm making a film about Penelope here, and it's called *Jolly Hockey Sticks* and it's about posh nobs who are too rich to wipe their own arses. And we're filming it in your house. Now would you kindly not do whatever it was you were doing please, otherwise we will have you forcibly removed.

CHARLOTTE. You don't know anything about me.

DANIELLE. Exactly.

*Pause.*

TIM. Sorry, does that mean I can / err

CHARLOTTE. I take your point. Okay? I understand where you are / coming from.

DANIELLE. Bollocks.

CHARLOTTE. Right.

*(Into her walkie-talkie.)* Security to the community centre. Immediately please. Take down the sign, Tim, thank you very much. Full cast and crew on set please!

CHARLOTTE *goes about her business. The set fills with people and DANIELLE and RUBY are swept out of the scene.*

TIM. Are you alright?

CHARLOTTE. Yes, let's get on with it. Everyone on set please. Thank you.

### Scene 3: First Day of Shooting

*Continued from the previous scene, the cast and crew all assemble on set. JEREMY fights his way to the front.*

JEREMY. Hello, everyone. Welcome...

*But he can't be heard.*

JEREMY. Okay. Err, maybe I should...

CHARLOTTE *helps him to stand on the desk.*

CHARLOTTE. Quiet on set please, everybody!

*Silence.*

Thank you.

JEREMY. Thank you, Charlotte. Hello, everyone. I'm Jeremy Hardcastle, quick word from me before we start. Welcome to four weeks on *Giant Killer*. It's going to be a difficult shoot. The reason for that is that nobody wants us to make this film. The council don't want us to make it, the residents don't want us to make it, the new owners of this housing estate – Prospect Developments – who I'm not supposed to mention don't want us to make it. So that's why we're making it. Because it's a story that needs to be told. This is an important piece of work and I'm proud to be here with you at the start of a great movie.

I... I want to say something else, but would you like to...

CHARLOTTE *gestures*.

Yes, Charlotte is already telling me to hurry up. If you hadn't realised yet, she is absolutely running this show. Rebecca, you wanted to say something.

REBECCA. Yeah, okay, I just...err /

JEREMY. Come up, come up.

*He helps her up on to the desk.*

REBECCA. I'm going to read you a quote from the research.

JEREMY (*aside*). Introduce it first.

REBECCA. Err, yeah, so erm. I think it's quite important to say this. Erm... hello, everyone.

By the way, I'm Rebecca, the screenwriter. Erm, during the Second World War, the government commissioned a report which would decide how they were going to rebuild the nation. A man called William Beveridge came up with five so-called giants which had to be abolished if this nation was ever to succeed. Those giants were – want, ignorance, squalor, idleness, and disease. This was the beginning of the welfare state, and whatever becomes of this film, whatever happens in the next weeks and months, it remains at the heart of it.

That's the important bit but this is the quote: 'The object of government in peace and in war is not the glory of rulers but the happiness of the common man.' Thank you.

JEREMY. Sophia? Anything?

*She doesn't get up on the table.*

SOPHIA. Hello, everyone, I'm Sophia, the producer. As Jeremy mentioned, this estate has recently been bought by private developers so please beware that the natives may be hostile. Plus all the usual – no ball games, keep off the grass. Any problems come to Charlotte or me. Thank you.

JEREMY. On set today we have one of the finest actors of her generation – Ms Elizabeth Nashe.

*A little applause.*

But she and the rest of this incredible cast will not be able to perform without the support of everyone. Kerry, where are you?

KERRY. Hello!

JEREMY. Kerry, our make-up artist drove up from Devon this morning to be here. Tim.

TIM. Yep.

JEREMY. Tim, one of our runners, is working on his first ever film. And I say this to all of you, we are in this together.

Okay, this is my first feature film, but I've done this on every film I've ever made. Grab the hand of a couple of people near to you.

*People gradually do.*

My Italian grandmother used to say this to me when I was a child. I'm going to say '*in bocca al lupo*' which means 'into the mouth of the wolf' and you have to respond with '*crepi lupo*' which means 'may the wolf die'. Okay? It's a good luck thing. And we'll do it three times. Hands in the air, here we go.

JEREMY. *In bocca al lupo!*

ALL. *Crepi lupo!*

JEREMY. *In bocca al lupo!*

ALL. *Crepi lupo!*

JEREMY. *In bocca al lupo!*

ALL. *Crepi lupo!*

JEREMY. Thank you, everyone. Let's have a great shoot.

*Some applause, as everyone disperses.*

CHARLOTTE. We're starting with scene one. Interior. The community centre. Positions please.

*The actors playing LEN and ALISON get into position.*

CHARLOTTE. Everyone ready?

DAVE. Hold on...

*DAVE listens closely to the noise in his headphones.*

CHARLOTTE. Actors in position?

ALISON. Yeah.

DAVE. Can everybody just be quiet for a minute.

*KERRY comes over to check the actors' make-up.*

KERRY (to ALISON). Can I have a quick look at you?

ALISON. Of course.

KERRY. Lovely. Jack?

*KERRY looks at him.*

DAVE (listening). What is that noise?

*DAVE looks around the space for the noise.*

JACK. I have quite oily skin. Is there anything you can do to take the sheen off?

KERRY. That's what I'm here for.

*She powders his face.*

JACK. But is there anything I should be doing to stop it being so oily? I've been washing my face with egg whites and lemon juice but it doesn't seem to be working.

KERRY. Use a gentle cleanser, avoid oily moisturisers.

JACK. I was thinking about taking up smoking because I hear that dries out the skin, I'm honestly at my wits' end with it.

DAVE. Can everybody stop talking, please.

CHARLOTTE (shouts). Quiet on set, please!

*KERRY tiptoes away.*

KERRY. Thank you, Charlotte.

*In the silence, DAVE brings the boom closer and closer to the source of the noise – SUZIE, the clapper loader. She is singing quietly to herself. DAVE stands and looks at her in her own world, singing Cole Porter.*

SHEILA. Suzie.

SUZIE *doesn't notice.*

SHEILA. Suzie, love, you're doing it again.

DAVE. Suzie!

SUZIE. What! Jesus, you don't have to creep up on me like that. What are you shouting for?

SHEILA. You were singing again, Suzie.

SUZIE. Oh god, was I? Sorry. Sorry, Dave, sorry, everyone.

*Beat.*

CHARLOTTE. Okay. (*Reads.*) 'The community centre of Hawksmoor House. The architect is holding a champagne reception to welcome the new tenants. Holding his wife's coat, Leonard is waiting for his wife outside the bathroom. Enter Alison.'

DAVE. Sound speed.

SHEILA. Rolling.

Mark it.

SUZIE. Slate one. Scene one. Take one.

JEREMY. Action!

*In the following scene, the film crew disappear as we watch the action.*

#### **Scene 4: Giant Killer Opening Scene**

*The community centre of Hawksmoor House. The architects are holding a champagne reception to welcome their new tenants.*

*Holding his wife's coat, LEONARD is waiting for his wife outside the bathroom. Enter ALISON.*

ALISON (*at door*). Are you...?

LEONARD. Leonard Whiteman.

ALISON. Oh, no I meant /

LEONARD. And you are...?

ALISON. I'm after the bathroom.

LEONARD. That's a funny name.

ALISON (*smiles*). Alison.

LEONARD *kisses her hand.*

LEONARD. The pleasure's all mine, Alison.

ALISON. Would you mind if I went first?

LEONARD. We could go in together if you like.

ALISON. Only I'm in a rush to powder my nose.

LEONARD. Yes, of course.

*Silence.* LEONARD *looks at her.*

You'll have to excuse me. It's just... it's that dress you're wearing.

ALISON. What about it?

LEONARD. It will make the mind wander.

ALISON. Oh? Where to, I wonder?

LEONARD. I've got a vivid imagination.

ALISON (*knocking*). Anybody in?

LEONARD. I'm only having a bit of fun. You can take a joke, can't you?

ALISON. I don't care for jokes like that.

LEONARD. All I meant is that your dress complements your beautiful figure.

ALISON. Thank you.

LEONARD. Go on then.

ALISON. What?

LEONARD. Gimme a spin.

ALISON (*knocking*). Hello?

LEONARD. Alright, give her a chance, she'll be out in a minute.

ALISON. Who will?

LEONARD. Annie. My better half.

ALISON. Annie Whiteman?

LEONARD. That's right.

ALISON. But I've just met her in the lounge not two minutes ago.

LEONARD. With all due respect, she's my wife. I know where she is and where she isn't.

*Someone comes out of the loo, it's not ANNIE.*

*In the lounge at the party, a dozen or so guests mill around. ANNIE and FRANK are dancing to 'The Way You Look Tonight'. FRANK sings along with verse four. Enter LEONARD who watches them.*

ANNIE notices LEONARD watching and breaks from FRANK.

ANNIE. There you are!

LEONARD. —

ANNIE. I thought I'd lost you.

LEONARD. I waited for you.

ANNIE. Where?

LEONARD. Where we agreed.

ANNIE. For all this time?

LEONARD. For all this time.

ANNIE. Sorry. Love... I was / just

LEONARD. You made me look like a fool.

ANNIE. Sorry. I was... /

FRANK. Hello, Len, nice to see you again.

ANNIE. You remember Frank.

LEONARD. Yes, of course. How are you?

*Pause.*

FRANK. We were just saying how close we used to live in the old street and now we're only one floor away from one another in the new building.

LEONARD. Can't get rid of you.

FRANK. Are you well, Len?

LEONARD. I've been better.

(To ANNIE.) Shall we?

ANNIE. You like the view, don't you, Len?

LEONARD. Yes.

ANNIE. Frank likes the view too.

FRANK. You can see the sea from my place.

ANNIE *smiles*.

LEONARD. On a clear day maybe.

FRANK. See! He agrees with me. Your wife thought that was a load of nonsense when I said it.

ANNIE. You can't see the sea from London!

FRANK. I love the seaside.

LEONARD. Come on then, let's get you home.

FRANK. Won't you stay for another – there's enough booze to see us through to Monday week.

LEONARD. She's had enough.

ANNIE. –

LEONARD. Annie.

ANNIE. Just a minute.

*Pause.*

FRANK. Settling in alright, are you, Len?

LEONARD. Yes, thanks.

FRANK. Hot running water, gas fire. The height of luxury.

LEONARD. What about your wife? Is Margaret enjoying it?

FRANK. Yes, thanks.

LEONARD. Send her my best, won't you.

FRANK. Yeah, I will.

*Silence.*

Well, nice to see you both.

Goodnight, Annie.

ANNIE. Goodnight, Frank.

FRANK. And remember what I said. Any time.

Goodnight, Len.

LEONARD. What did you say?

FRANK. I'm sorry?

LEONARD. 'Remember what I said' – what was it you said?

FRANK. –

LEONARD. Come on. You can't have forgotten.

FRANK. Only... in Annie's condition. If there's anything I can do to help. To help either of you.

*ALISON clinks a glass, causing the room to fall silent.*

ALISON. Good evening, everybody, I think by now, I have met all of you in person, I'm Alison Hartshorn, the architect of this wonderful new building. Thank you for coming to our little welcome party.

I would also like to say how delighted I am to be your new neighbour. What I was striving to achieve with this building

was to rehouse the East End in a bold and contemporary way. Your old terraced housing is gone, demolished, unfit for purpose, and nobody will ever live in that way again. Welcome to the future, ladies and gentlemen. We are collective citizens in this radiant new city in the sky, and pioneers of an extraordinary new way of living together. I hope you will be very happy here for many generations to come.

Please join me in raising a toast to the future of Hawksmoor House.

ALL. Hawksmoor House!

\*

## **A Nick Hern Book**

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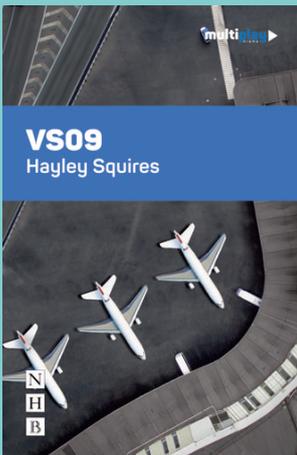
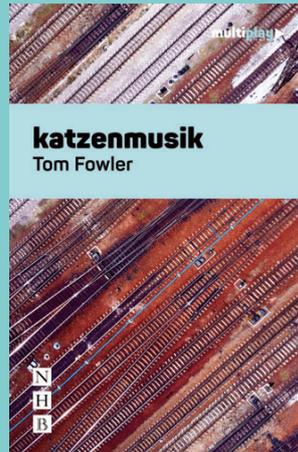
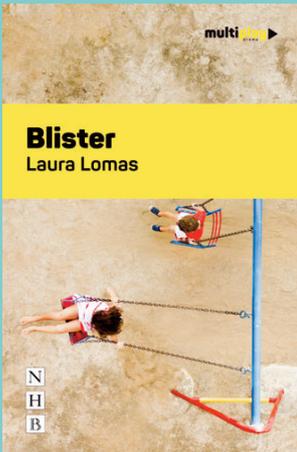
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