

Strength

ROBERT 60s

LUCILLE 60s

NB UNLESS OTHERWISE DIRECTED LUCILLE NEVER LOOKS AT ROBERT

LOCATION: A THREE APARTMENT IN A GLASGOW HOUSING SCHEME

TIME: EVENING.

1 INT. THE LIVING-ROOM

The television is on but neither is watching. She stares to the side of it. He has the newspaper on his lap, browsing. He comes to notice that she is not watching.

ROBERT

What ye thinking?

LUCILLE raises her eyebrow and does not look towards him

LUCILLE

That night ye had the brainwave.

Robert continues to look at her then drops his gaze, sighs. He closes his eye, and concentrates on breathing for a couple moments. Now he looks at her. She is not looking at him, but at the side of the television.

ROBERT makes to speak, hesitates, and does not.

LUCILLE glances in his direction BUT ONLY briefly

LUCILLE

Ye had the brainwave

ROBERT sighs

That's right hen, it was late on and I had turned off the fire and the lights and all that, you were away to bed

LUCILLE

Mmhh

ROBERT is still holding the newspaper but does not reference it

ROBERT

I just sat down with the paper for a minute.

LUCILLE

Ye pulled out the plugs.

ROBERT

Well aye, last thing at night, I always pull out the plugs.

LUCILLE

I heard ye through the wall. Yer memory was playing tricks.

ROBERT gazes at her a moment, and he smiles

ROBERT

It was playing tricks, that's right.

LUCILLE

Ye told me that.

ROBERT

*Well aye, yeh, that's right, because it was playing tricks on me.
That is what it was doing*

LUCILLE

Ye were back with that wee lassie on the back seat of yer motor bike.

ROBERT nodding

The pillion

LUCILLE pauses, perhaps to let the word "pillion" sink in. ROBERT just watches her

LUCILLE

You and that motorbike. You loved that motorbike.

ROBERT smiles, at the same time he is defensive, he shrugs

LUCILLE

Ye loved it

ROBERT smiles. LUCILLE glances at him.

LUCILLE

Ye did

ROBERT

I told ye because I thought ye would want to hear.

LUCILLE

It was a brainwave, that was what ye called it.

ROBERT

Well aye, I didnay know what else to call it; it just came frae nothing. I telt ye that at the time.

LUCILLE

I like hearing things when ye tell me, even when I dont know ye're doing it.

ROBERT looks at her. LUCILLE waits a moment before continuing

LUCILLE

Ye had the lassie on the back seat and ye were on yer motor bike driving down to a pub in Gourrock where yer friends went, away past the Dumbarton Rock and the tide was out and ye were thinking about Mary Queen of Scots incarcerated there in the dungeon, ye were going to the nightschool and doing yer exams, and ye came crashing down.

ROBERT nods

LUCILLE

Ye were seventeen.

ROBERT

I was, that's right; too young for the pub.

LUCILLE nods

ROBERT

We used to creep in and my pal got me a half pint.

LUCILLE

No for the first time.

ROBERT

No for the first time naw, I came down a few times

LUCILLE

Ye had crashes.

ROBERT shrugs, smiles

LUCILLE

But that was the worst.

ROBERT

Well aye, yeh, it was, it was the worst

ROBERT sighs. He now speaks as though recalling the incident for the first time.

ROBERT

Yeh

LUCILLE looks at him a moment. ROBERT meets her gaze and nods briefly

ROBERT

The lassie broke her pelvis... wee Joannie. I suffered the leg break, it took months to get better.

ROBERT is silent a moment then smiles, ruefully

ROBERT

I missed that exam as well. The nightschool it was.

LUCILLE

You were studying

ROBERT nods

LUCILLE

The policemen says ye were oh so lucky no to be lying there dead on the side of the road, silly young buggers. That was what they says to ye; silly young buggers. But ye were, the two of ye; you as well as her, ye were silly young buggers.

LUCILLE is shaking her head at ROBERT but now she smiles briefly. ROBERT sees her smile. LUCILLE gazes at the television now.

ROBERT is rueful

Yeh, we were lucky to escape.

LUCILLE does not respond in any way. ROBERT watches her

ROBERT

We were

LUCILLE ignores him. ROBERT smiles, he gets to his feet and crosses the carpet to her. He takes her hand and holds it. LUCILLE does not resist, but continues ignoring him

ROBERT

We were lucky to escape, lucky no to get killed.

ROBERT pauses and smiles

ROBERT

If I had I wouldnay have met you.

LUCILLE shifts one foot up onto the pouffe. ROBERT watches her, a little anxiously. LUCILLE has to shift her seated position.. ROBERT shakes his head slightly

ROBERT

That's pouffe's too high, how come I even got the thing

LUCILLE ignores him; maybe what he says does not register. ROBERT watches how she sits

ROBERT

It is, it's too high off the ground. It means yer foot is on a higher level than yer knee, and it's bad for circulation

LUCILLE pays no attention to this

ROBERT sighs

Yer leg just stiffens up, I know it does. That makes yer back even worse

LUCILLE

It's a grumbling condition

ROBERT

It is, that's what it is, and it's hard for ye, I know it is. I wouldnay cope with it, I wouldnay, no if it was me.

LUCILLE is listening to him now, just not responding

ROBERT

There's nothing worse, ye try and forget about it but ye cannay, it's just always there, every time ye move, even if ye dont move.

LUCILLE

You were elated. That's what ye were, ye says that to me.

ROBERT

I was elated, it was a great thing about the bike.

LUCILLE

That was what ye says to me, ye felt so very close to yer wee lassie and ye were elated.

ROBERT is silent

LUCILLE

That was what ye says

ROBERT nods. LUCILLE also nods

LUCILLE

Ye says that

ROBERT

I did. Just being on the bike. It was a great feeling

LUCILLE nods

ROBERT

It's hard to describe.

LUCILLE smiles. ROBERT sees her smile, and he frowns

LUCILLE

I only wish she had gave ye more sex because I know ye need it.

ROBERT shakes his head

No

LUCILLE

I think she thinks that too, I do.

ROBERT sighs. LUCILLE looks at him and speaks in a matter-of-fact tone

LUCILLE

Ye says ye were angry at her mother for letting her think it was something to be doled out once in a blue moon. That was what ye says.

ROBERT is controlling himself now; this is something he is used to

ROBERT

Aye but hen I was only kidding.

LUCILLE

Ye says that.

ROBERT

Aye but I was only kidding hen I was kidding, honest, I was just kidding

LUCILLE looks back to the television but she is not discomfitted in any way, just matter-of-fact

ROBERT

I didnay mean it like it sounds; it's just patter, I was just saying it to ye.

LUCILLE

Ye were angry at her mother.

Now ROBERT shows a little irritation

ROBERT

I was nay angry at her mother

ROBERT studies LUCILLE but LUCILLE ignores him

ROBERT

I was kidding ye on when I says that.

LUCILLE

She told the wee lassie a pack of lies.

ROBERT

I would nay have says that, a pack of lies.

LUCILLE

She filled her head with nonsense, that was what ye says. it was all just a pack of lies. She filled her head with it.

ROBERT is watching her. LUCILLE now looks at him. LUCILLE is waiting. But Robert says nothing

LUCILLE

That was what ye says, that was how ye were angry at her,

ROBERT sighs. LUCILLE glances sideways at him, but quickly looks away

ROBERT

Hen it's daft talking like this.

LUCILLE

I dont like hearing how the two of ye drifted apart. No for anything special, probably just a natural progression. The way life goes, that was what ye says.

ROBERT only stares at her

LUCILLE

The habits ye had were aye bad for ye but ye never changed them.

ROBERT almost speaks, but does not

LUCILLE

I know ye loved that wee lassie, but it doesnay bother me. Even if ye had got killed the gether, the two of ye, it still wouldnay bother me. That is true love ways.

LUCILLE turns, looking directly at him

LUCILLE

I just admire ye both.

LUCILLE continues to look at him

LUCILLE

I do.

ROBERT sighs. He stares at the carpet and sees her cup, he stretches to lift it and place it onto the mantelpiece. One of LUCILLE's slippers is half-on half-off. ROBERT bends to correct this. Obviously he is very careful, very tender.

ROBERT

Your back will get sore sitting like that

LUCILLE frowns at him, but maybe for some other reason. ROBERT smiles

ROBERT

Because ye dont sit right, I'm never done telling ye

LUCILLE frowns at him again. ROBERT smiles, wagging his right forefinger at her

ROBERT

Ye see! It's no my bad habits it's yours, these sore backs ye get, it's nay wonder. They're to do with how ye sit and stand and how ye hold yerself when ye walk. If people dont have the proper posture they rue the day, ye know that. It even includes sitting down, if ye've got yer feet up, it can cause pressure on the spine. Honestly hen I mean it, I'm no just saying it it's true, ye've got to sit right. And keep yer feet at the right level, just watch that damn pouffe, I wouldnay even have had a pouffe!

LUCILLE studies him. Now her look is quizzical. She shakes her head, and states in matter-of-fact tones.

LUCILLE

Even if ye had got killed the gether, the two of yez, it still wouldnay bother me.

ROBERT

It's nonsense talking like that.

LUCILLE

It wouldnay bother me. It wouldnay.

ROBERT

Ye're just worrying about nothing.

LUCILLE

I would still admire ye.

ROBERT

Honestly hen it's nay good when ye talk like this, I hate it, I dont like it at all, and it's worry about nothing, that's the thing about it. [PAUSE] It is. Ye're just worrying about nothing. It's all auld stuff as well, it's finished and done with, so I dont know what ye go on about it for. Is that no right?

LUCILLE watches him for a moment

ROBERT

Do ye no think that's right? When ye let these auld things go through yer head, it's daft, it's just getting raked up for nothing

LUCILLE

Ye were too young

ROBERT sighs, he hates hearing this.

LUCILLE

Ye were. Ye were no ready to get serious. I know you werent. I blame her mother

ROBERT sighs. LUCILLE glances near her feet then up at the mantelpiece. ROBERT gets the cup of tea and hands it carefully to her. LUCILLE sips from it and he continues to hold the cup

LUCILLE

I do.

ROBERT

Och hen it's aw past, it's past, dont rake it up again

LUCILLE

What I think - I was thinking about it - it would have to have been for keeps because ye both recognised something in each other that was strong and ye hadnay seen it afore and neither had she and it made ye scared, the two of ye. Ye were too young, no ready to get serious, settling down, ye werent ready. I dont think ye were, that is what I would say. But my sister Effie was only seventeen; virgins except with each other, her and Harry, ye could wish everybody would be the same about it only they arent, some are more advanced than others.

ROBERT

Aye but it depends what ye mean hen, it depends.

LUCILLE

They are.

LUCILLE points to his hands. ROBERT puts them closer to her and she lays the cup down next to her feet. ROBERT barely notices this. LUCILLE now leans a little forward to examine his fingers, but in a perfunctory manner.

LUCILLE

Ye've got these big fingers. But they're clean and yer nails are neat and tidy.

ROBERT grins, gestures over his shoulder

ROBERT

Well I just done the dishes.

LUCILLE

Ye always kept yerself neat and tidy.

ROBERT frowns

I did, aye.

LUCILLE nods

ROBERT

You liked it but, you liked it about me. Ye telt me to my face, ye liked it.

LUCILLE nods

ROBERT

Ye did though. That was what ye says. Honest, ye says it to me.

LUCILLE nods, amost convinced

ROBERT, ruefully

Aw but you were aye stubborn! Ye were. Ever since I knew ye, ye were so stubborn. That was a thing about you, never mind me. Then yer intuition, dont forget that!

LUCILLE sighs, now looking towards the television

LUCILLE

Ye dont want me to dwell on the things that happen, ye dont like it, ye never liked it.

LUCILLE smiles. Her foot is very near to the cup on the carpet. ROBERT now sees this and he reaches for it

ROBERT

Honestly hen I dont know what ye mean.

ROBERT places the cup on the mantelpiece

LUCILLE

Ye dont want me to dwell on it.

ROBERT

Well if it's the past ye're talking about I've seen what it does to people. It affects them. It gets them all twisted inside their head. It makes them bitter and they end up with sour faces.

LUCILLE smiles

ROBERT

It does

LUCILLE

That's daft, sour faces.

ROBERT

It's no daft it's a fact, I've seen it manys a time. People get choked by it.

LUCILLE

The truth never hurt.

ROBERT

Dwelling on it did. Dwelling too much on it.

LUCILLE, ironically

Fancy that.

ROBERT studies her. LUCILLE stares to the side of the television

ROBERT

I dont know what ye're getting at me for. Honestly hen, I dont.

LUCILLE

Sour faces.

ROBERT stares at her. LUCILLE stares to the side of the television

ROBERT

I never had a sour face

LUCILLE does not respond

ROBERT shrugs

I didnay

LUCILLE

You didnay want to be serious. Boys.

ROBERT scratches his head at the last comment

ROBERT

I actually did. I did want to be serious. That's one thing; so it irks me when ye say that hen, I didnay want to be serious, because really I did, I did. It wasnay me that was...that was eh...it wasnay me.

LUCILLE seems not to have heard him

LUCILLE

What do folk know. They think about a lot of things. Well at least they know a lot. If they didnt then they never would and they would live to regret it.

ROBERT stares at her, and it becomes a frown as he puzzles over that

LUCILLE

If they firmly believe it they accept it. And so it's unfair even to think it, if they tried harder, instead of blaming themself all the time, it's just a waste and it ends up sucking the life out ye, it's best making excuses so it is not anybody to blame.

ROBERT

Hen there isnay anybody to blame, there's naybody to blame, it's only how it happened and it was a long time ago. It was, it's just raking it up and it's for nothing.

LUCILLE

I dont like her name.

ROBERT

Joan

LUCILLE

I dont like it.

ROBERT

It's only a name

LUCILLE shakes her head

LUCILLE

Joan

ROBERT

It was her name

LUCILLE

I dont like it. If I thought it was mainly to do with strength but I dont. And then when you're close to me yer face looks big. When I was a girl it was to do with strength, that was what it was. But now it goes funny and I have to listen hard. I'm talking but my voice is disappearing.

ROBERT is gazing at her. The silence continues. ROBERT takes her hand

ROBERT

Of course it's no, of course it's no.

LUCILLE does not acknowledge him

LUCILLE

I have to listen hard, I do.

ROBERT is still holding her hand, and he still gazes at her but she is remote from him. ROBERT lets go her hand and she does not respond. He gets up, waits a moment then leaves the room.

2 INT. THE LOBBY OF THE THREE APARTMENT FLAT

ROBERT walks ben the lobby, and into the kitchenette.

3 INT. THE LOBBY OF THE THREE APARTMENT FLAT

ROBERT goes about domestic chores in a manner that might be domesticated but at the same time is mechanical, almost absent-minded.

There are dishes by the draining board. ROBERT piles them into a basin inside the sink. He pauses, staring out the one window. After a moment he looks at the

dishes then remembers the washing-up liquid, sprinkles some in, turns on the tap to fill the basin.

ROBERT'S attention distracted by the view out the window. He stares out. Then he is aware of the water filling the basin and switches off the tap. He looks at the floor, rips off a page of kitchen-roll, dampens it and folds it, then gets onto his knees and uses this dampened folded kitchen-roll paper to clean round the edge of the floor beneath the storage units. Then he dumps the dirty paper into the bin, pulls the tap to the side and rinses his fingers away from the washing-up basin. He dries his hands, staring out the window.

4 INT. THE LIVING-ROOM

LUCILLE is sitting in the same position as before except that she has pulled the pouffe back to beneath her feet. She is straining to hear the television.

ROBERT enters. He sees her straining to hear and glances sideways. The remote-control device is on the coffee-table. He walks to get it, turns up the volume a little, cheerily. The position of this remote-control means that LUCILLE would only have had to stretch a little to lift it. ROBERT returns it to the coffee-table, sees the pouffe.

ROBERT chuckles

Oh now there's that pouffe again! I feel like flinging it out. I feel like flinging it out the wind!

LUCILLE keeps her feet on it.

ROBERT

Talk about stubborn!

LUCILLE ignores him, but in a studious way. She has heard him.

ROBERT grins

I know. I know

LUCILLE sighs, gives an irritated look at him

ROBERT

I dont like seeing these frown lines on yer forehead. And yer skin, look at yer skin, it's just always dry, it shouldnay be as dry as that, it's like it's gony develop into an acne or a rash.

LUCILLE is ignoring him

ROBERT

It's vitamins. Ye should take the cod-liver oils, that's what I get them for but if ye dont take them...

LUCILLE gives a loud irritated sigh as though she cannot hear the television for his talking

ROBERT, good-humouredly

Ye dont! If I dont remember you dont. But you need to because my memory is just hopeless. It's always been hopeless, as well ye know. As well you know.

LUCILLE looks at him

ROBERT

If it wasnt for you. Yes, if it wasnt for you. Where would we be! You and yer women's intuition! Ye always had it!

LUCILLE is watching him, listening

ROBERT

We always had a good laugh at that, me and you. Mind that time we were gon a sail down the water and you says no to bother booking tickets because it would be too stormy and gales and everything and it would all be cancelled, they wouldnay be able to bring the boat into the pier? Remember that? And it was true, just like ye said! Remember!

LUCILLE watching him

ROBERT

It turned out right, just like other things. That was a strong thing that. Manys the time you telt me things when the kids were wee and then when they were aulder I had to go and get them if they were out at the dancing or something and you got an intuition there. Mind that? Ye got intuitions. I just went with it. I wouldnay take the chance no to.

LUCILLE is concentrating on what he is saying, her knees drawn up, her feet still balancing on the pouffe

ROBERT

The kids were fed up with it, especially David, hom being a boy but he had to put up with it as well. The two of them, they knew that car of mine would be there, waiting across the road. I just used to say to David, Dont worry about it son if ye get a lumber, I'll gie her a drive up the road. And Lucy too, when she got aulder, I didnay care if she got embarassed, ye dont ignore yer mother's intuition, when yer mother gets that ye listen, I used to tell her, it's at yer peril.

ROBERT grins, and he shakes his head. LUCILLE is now shifting round on her chair again, as though in an awkward position. The pillow behind her shoulders seemed askew. ROBERT begins to make her more comfortable on the chair.

ROBERT

It's that stupid pouffe

ROBERT sighs, continues to make her comfortable.

end