

Shopping and F***ing

Mark Ravenhill

Scene 2. Interview room. London.

For some time, Robbie and his companion, Lulu (both early 20s), have been living with Mark, a former wealthy city type, in a bizarre and sinister ménage à trois. Mark has taken the two of them under his wing, promising, 'I love you both and I want to look after you for ever and ever.' Since then, thanks to Mark's pay packet, they have enjoyed 'Good times. The three of us. Parties. Falling into taxis, out of taxis. Bed.' But Mark has now reached a crisis point where he has run out of money and lost his job. He decides to check himself into a drug rehabilitation centre. This leaves Lulu and Robbie to fend entirely for themselves. Lulu, who has trained as an actress, applies for a job as a TV presenter on a home shopping channel. Brian (late 30s) is the producer of the shopping programme. He is married and has a young son of whom he is extremely proud. It transpires that he pays for his son's private education and prized cello lessons with the money he makes by employing people like Lulu to sell Ecstasy at local raves. As this scene opens, Lulu is in the midst of her audition with Brian and she is completely unaware of his alternative agenda.

(BRIAN and LULU sit facing each other. BRIAN is showing LULU an illustrated plastic plate.)

BRIAN. And there's this moment. This really terrific moment. Quite possibly the best moment. Because really, you see, his father is dead. Yes? The father was crushed – you feel the sorrow welling up in you – crushed by a wild herd of these big cows. One moment, lord of all he surveys. And then . . . a breeze, a wind, the stamping of a

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hundred feet and he's gone. Only it wasn't an accident. Somebody had a plan. You see?

LULU. Yes. I see.

BRIAN. Any questions. Any uncertainties. You just ask. **LULU.** Of course.

BRIAN. Because I want you to follow.

LULU. Absolutely.

BRIAN. So then we're . . . there's . . .

LULU. Crushed by a herd of wild cows.

BRIAN. Crushed by a herd of wild cows. Yes.

LULU. Only it wasn't an accident.

BRIAN. Good. Excellent. Exactly. It wasn't an accident. It may have looked like an accident but – no. It was arranged by the uncle. Because –

LULU. Because he wanted to be King all along.

BRIAN. Thought you said you hadn't seen it.

LULU. I haven't.

Instinct. I have good instincts. That's one of my qualities. I'm an instinctive person.

BRIAN. Is that right?

(BRIAN writes down 'instinctive' on a pad.)

BRIAN. Good. Instinctive. Could be useful.

LULU. Although of course I can also use my rational side. Where appropriate.

BRIAN. So you'd say you appreciate order?

LULU. Order. Oh yes. Absolutely. Everything in its place.

(BRIAN writes down 'appreciates order'.)

BRIAN. Good. So now the father is dead. Murdered. It was the uncle. And the son has grown up. And you know – he looks like the dad. Just like him. And this sort of monkey thing comes to him. And this monkey says: 'It's time to speak to your dead dad.' So he goes to the stream and he looks in and he sees –

LULU. /His own reflection.

BRIAN. His own reflection. You've never seen this?

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LULU. Never.
BRIAN. But then . . . The water ripples, it hazes. Until he sees a ghost. A ghost or a memory looking up at him.
His . . .
(*Pause.*)
Excuse me. It takes you right here. Your throat tightens. Until . . . he sees . . . his . . . dad.
My little one. Gets to that bit and I look round and he's got these big tears in his eyes. He feels it like I do. Because now the dad speaks. And he says: 'The time has come. It is time for you to take your place in the Cycle of Being (words to that effect). You are my son and the one true King.'
And he knows what it is he's got to do. He knows who it is he has to kill.
And that's the moment. That's our favourite bit.
LULU. I can see that. Yes.
BRIAN. Would you say you in any way resembled your father?
LULU. No. Not really. Not much.
BRIAN. Your mother?
LULU. Maybe. Sometimes. Yes.
BRIAN. You do know who your parents are?
LULU. Of course. We still . . . you know. Christmas. We spend Christmas together. On the whole.
(*BRIAN writes down 'celebrates Christmas'.*)
BRIAN. So many today are lost. Isn't that so?
LULU. I think that's right. Yes.
BRIAN. All they want is something.
And some come here. They look to me. You're looking to me aren't you?
Well aren't you?
LULU. Yes. I'm looking to you.
BRIAN (*proffers plate*). Here. Hold it. Just hold it up beside you. See if you look right. Smile. Look interested.

Because this is special. You wouldn't want to part with this. Can you give me that look?
(*LULU attempts the look.*)
BRIAN. That's good. Very good. Our viewers, they have to believe that what we hold up to them is special. For the right sum - life is easier, richer, more fulfilling. And you have to believe that too. Do you think you can do that?
(*Again LULU attempts the look.*)
BRIAN. Good. That's very good. We don't get many in your league.
LULU. Really?
BRIAN. No. That really is very . . . distinctive.
LULU. Well. Thank you. Thanks.
BRIAN. And now: 'Just a few more left. So dial this number now.'
LULU. Just a few more left. So dial this number now.
BRIAN. Excellent. Natural. Professional. Excellent.
LULU. I have had training.
BRIAN. So you're . . . ?
LULU. I'm a trained actor.
(*BRIAN writes down 'trained actor'.*)
BRIAN. I don't recognise you.
LULU. No? Well, probably not.
BRIAN. Do some for me now.
LULU. You want me to . . . ?
BRIAN. I want to see you doing some acting.
LULU. I didn't realise. I haven't prepared.
BRIAN. Come on. You're an actress. You must be able to do some acting.
An actress - if she can't do acting when she's asked, then what is she really?
She's nothing.
LULU. All right.
(*LULU stands up.*)

LULU. I haven't actually done this one before. In front of anyone.

BRIAN. Never mind. You're doing it now.

LULU. One day people will know what all this was for. All this suffering.

BRIAN. Take your jacket off.

LULU. I'm sorry?

BRIAN. I'm asking you to take your jacket off. Can't act with your jacket on.

LULU. Actually, I find it helps.

BRIAN. In what way?

LULU. The character.

BRIAN. Yes. But it's not helping me. I'm here to assess your talents and you're standing there acting in a jacket.

LULU. I'd like to keep it on.

BRIAN (*stands*). All right. I'll call the girl. Or maybe you remember the way?

LULU. No.

BRIAN. What do you mean - no?

LULU. I mean . . . please, I'd like this job. I want to be considered for this job.

BRIAN. Then we'll continue. Without the jacket. Yes?

(LULU *removes her jacket. Two chilled ready meals fall to the floor.*)

BRIAN. Look at all this.

(*They both go to pick up the meals. BRIAN gets there first.*)

BRIAN. Exotic.

LULU. We've got really into them. That's what we eat. For supper.

BRIAN. Did you pay for these?

LULU. Yes.

BRIAN. Stuffed into your jacket. Did you pay for them?

LULU. Yes.

BRIAN. Look me in the eyes. Did. You. Pay?

LULU. No.

BRIAN. Stolen goods.

LULU. We have to eat. We have to get by. I don't like this. I'm not a shoplifter. By nature. My instinct is for work. I need a job. Please.

BRIAN. You're an actress by instinct but theft is a necessity. Unless you can persuade me that I need you. All right. Carry on. Act a bit more.

No shirt.

LULU. No . . . ?

BRIAN. Carry on without the . . . (what's the . . . ?) . . . blouse.

(LULU *removes her blouse.*)

LULU. One day people will know what all this was for. All this suffering. There'll be no more mysteries. But until then we must carry on working. We must work. That's all we can do. I'm leaving by myself tomorrow . . .

BRIAN (*stifling a sob*). Oh, God.

LULU. I'm sorry. Shall I stop?

BRIAN. Carry on. As you were.

LULU. Leaving by myself tomorrow. I'll teach in a school and devote my whole life to people who need it. It's autumn now. It will soon be winter and there'll be snow everywhere. But I'll be working.

That's all.

(LULU *puts her shirt and jacket on.*)

BRIAN (*wipes away a tear*). Perfect. Brilliant. Did you make it up?

LULU. No. I learnt it. From a book.

BRIAN. Brilliant. So you think you can sell?

LULU. I know I can sell.

BRIAN. Because you're an actress?

LULU. It helps.

BRIAN. You seem very confident.

LULU. I am.

BRIAN. All right then. A trial. Something by way of a

test. I'm going to give you something to sell and we're going to see how well you do. Clear so far?

LULU. Totally.

BRIAN. You understand that I am *entrusting* you?

LULU. I understand.

BRIAN. I am entrusting you to pass this important test.

LULU. I'm not going to let you down.

BRIAN. Good.

(BRIAN reaches for his briefcase and starts to open it.)

COMMENTARY: This darkly comic drama presents a desolate world in which sex, drugs and junk food take precedence over relationships and conventional morality. The two characters in this scene are both obsessed and desperate, but in quite different ways. At this point in the play, Lulu seems prepared to do anything to make some money and Brian exploits her eagerness and vulnerability. When Brian asks Lulu to take off her top she is more concerned that her stolen heat-and-serve meals will drop out from under her jacket than she is about revealing her breasts. Do you think Brian ever really intended to offer Lulu a job or is the interview merely a front? Brian's interview technique is somewhat unorthodox and has the intensity of an interrogation. Brian is a consummate manipulator whose smarmy manner is tingled with an aura of menace. There is something comically sinister in his obsession with *The Lion King*. For this scene to work in performance you must find a way to make your audience both laugh and squirm. This scene starts in the middle of the conversation between Lulu and Brian; how do you think they got to this point?

Simpatico

Sam Shepard

Act 3, scene 1. Living room of Carter's Kentucky mansion, very simple set with the impression of wealth.

Vinnie (40s) is 'dressed in a dark blue long-sleeved shirt, dark slacks with no belt. Everything very rumpled as though he's been sleeping in his clothes for weeks. . . . with a "Redwing" shoebox tucked under his arm.' Rosie (late 30s) is 'slightly hung over and rumped'. She is still wearing her robe. Rosie's husband, Carter, and Vinnie have known each other since they were kids. Fifteen years ago they were business partners involved in a California racetrack scam that involved the swapping of two racehorses and the gross sexual blackmail of Simms, the local commissioner of racing. Vinnie still holds the vital evidence that could incriminate his one-time partner and over the years Carter has paid Vinnie to keep him quiet. At the time of the scam Vinnie and Rosie were married but she then eloped with Carter and married him. Vinnie and Rosie have not seen each other since that time. Rosie now leads a life of wealth and comfort with a navy to look after her two children. Over the years, as Carter has prospered as a horse breeder, Vinnie has become an increasingly reclusive bum, indulging in fantasy detective games. Vinnie summons Carter to his rundown apartment in Cucamonga in California. He lures him with the pretence that he needs his help to deal with a 'major crisis' involving a girlfriend who had him arrested for assault. However, it transpires that Vinnie has decided that the time has come to revenge himself on Carter and this is all part of his warped plot. In this scene, having abandoned Carter in Cucamonga, Vinnie comes unannounced to Carter's house to visit Rosie. This is their first encounter in fifteen years.