

Sweet  
As You  
Are

by

Jonathan Hall

## Scene One

**(The lights come up in a spot. In this spotlight we see Ben, who stands, calm, assured, papers in hand. When he speaks he is calm and totally self assured making eye contact with different members of the audience.)**

Ben: Good evening. I'd like to start off by thanking you for asking me here to the Aire Valley Mother's Union to speak to you tonight, it's very encouraging to be asked. My name's Ben Aspinall and as you may or may not know I'm from the northern branch of 'Aware' that is the Agricultural Watchdog and Research Group, an independent body created specifically to monitor issues of environmental concern. And it's about one such concern that I'm here to speak to you tonight and I want to say I make no bones about the fact I'm setting out to scare you. **(he smiles)** Not without reason I don't think I could do that, you're all intelligent adults, but because I think the issue I'm talking to you about is one that is frightening. Very frightening indeed.

**(We switch to the flat. It's best if this is done representationally. A couple of chairs, a coffee table, but even so there is evidence of order and pride. Magazines arranged neatly on the table, rug at exact angles to the chairs, perhaps not quite anti-macassars but the modern day IKEA equivalent of. A doorbell rings and Jenny hurries on, wiping her hands on a towel. As she passes through the room she sees a dirty coffee cup, with an expression of distaste she whisks it back to the kitchen. The doorbell rings again, more insistently.)**

Jenny: Coming- I'm just coming. **(We hear her off stage saying hello to someone. She re-enters followed by Andy, who smiles nervously and carries a bag of shopping)** Come on through. So you're Aidy-

Andy: Andy.

Jenny: Sorry?

Andy: Andy. Short for Andrea.

Jenny: Oh. I was sure it was Aidy.

Andy: Maybe you've mixed me up with someone else?

Jenny: I don't think so.

Andy: Another person coming to look round?

Jenny: No, there's only you **(quickly, because she doesn't really want her to know this at this point)** Today that is. Right, I'll give you El Grand Tour and then we'll have some tea.

Andy: Great. **(she dumps her shopping bag unceremoniously on one of the chairs.)**

Jenny: **(smiling brightly at this)** Leave your bag in the hall if you want.

Andy: Just the week's shop.

Jenny: **(jocularly)** Not from U-Save I hope.

Andy: Yeah as a matter of fact.

Jenny: **(still smiling)** Aggh **(she makes the sign of the cross. Andy looks at her mystified)** Sorry, just a little household joke, you'll have to ignore me, this is a very environmentally aware flat I'm afraid. **(She punctuates this last phrase with little exclamation marks drawn in the air with her fingers.)**

**(We switch back to the lecture hall- Ben is getting well into his stride.)**

Ben: The food we eat. Once upon a time not a problem the only concern: can we get enough of it? But not now. In the last ten years we've seen a wave, an absolute wave of disasters that have shaken our faith in the food industry to its very roots. E-Coli thickening the blood and literally tearing apart the kidneys. Salmonella, permanently weakening the digestive system. And BSE, rotting holes in the brains of its victims. All terrible horrifying things and all in the food we've been eating. Food which the governments of the day told us was absolutely safe. And now the present Government assures us that there is absolutely no risk from foods which have had their very genetic make up tampered with, foods which I have to say are sold in our supermarkets and are being eaten daily by millions. Here in this very town you only have to go as far as the local branch of U-Save. **(He holds up a bulging carrier bag and brandishes it.)** All bought today and all containing genetically modified foodstuffs.

**(Jenny is concluding her tour of the flat)**

Jenny: And that's about it bathroom of course you've seen, there's usually bags of hot water in fact heat is never really a problem even when it's really nippy like today and it's very economical, naturally we'd split all bills like gas and electric 50/50. The phone bill's itemised so that's not an issue. **(she smiles deprecatingly)** And so back to 'El lounge' which naturally you'd have the run of as t'were. You're welcome to bring anyone back, within reason. **(a laugh to show this is almost a joke)** I warn you in advance my fiasco's round a fair bit, though I am doing my very best to house train him.

Andy: Fiasco?

Jenny: Just my joke, fiancée. He's reasonably civilised.

Andy: So how much is it?

Jenny: Sorry?

Andy: The rent, how much is it?

Jenny: Ah, of course, hundred and fifty a month, bills on top.

Andy: One fifty?

Jenny: **(suddenly worried)** Is that too much?

Andy: No it's very reasonable.

Jenny: You think?

Andy: For this part of town, yes.

Jenny: I've brought it down twice already.

Andy: Why?

Jenny: I thought I was asking too much.

Andy: Why?

Jenny: Well, it's just, well. **(in a sudden honest rush)** There didn't seem to be that much interest, I've had an ad in the paper for weeks now.

Andy: Which one?

Jenny: The Target, but no replies, was that where you saw it?

Andy: No, I don't get the Target, a friend told me.

Jenny: I see.

Andy: Rather a friend of a friend.

Jenny: Right.

Andy: How many have looked round?

Jenny: Well you're the first as a matter of fact.

Andy: That's odd.

Jenny: Ben says I must scare them off.

Andy: Ben's your.

Jenny: Fiancée, he took care of the ad, bless him.

**(Cut back to Ben)**

Ben: It's a simple process. Frighteningly simple. DNA. **(he shows a picture of the double helix)** Present in every living thing. The organism's book of instructions, so to speak. Genes, sentences from that book, sentences that dictate the organism's characteristics. This gene dictates blue eyes, this gene, red petals. This gene: you're prone to cancer. Now we can isolate these genes. Isolate them and inject

them into the DNA of other organisms. The gene of a fish in the DNA of a strawberry. The gene of a scorpion in the DNA of a maize plant. The gene of a rat in the DNA of a potato. **(He emphasises the distasteful aspects, i.e. rat and scorpion)** Example. The strawberry, lovely fruit, lovely but very susceptible to low temperatures. All it takes is one unseasonal frost and bingo, you've lost a whole crop. So what d'you do? Simple, inject a gene from the arctic flounder, the gene that lets the fish survive in very low temperatures and what have you got? Bingo, strawberries that can survive the coldest weather. Fine you say, and I'll agree superficially it's all very exciting. But what are the long term effects of this tampering? Put quite simply, we don't know. Oh, the Governments, the Food Companies, the Supermarkets are saying it's okay, but that's what they want to believe. By the same token 50 years ago tobacco companies were telling us smoking was actually beneficial to our health! So the big agro food companies Monsanto, Sainsburys, Safeways can see the profits but cannot or will not see the potential hazards.

**(We switch back to the flat. Jenny is entering with a tray.)**

Jenny: Tea up!

Andy: Great.

Jenny: **(putting the tray down)** Here we are, help yourself to milk and sugar.

Andy: Ta very much. **(she liberally helps herself to sugar, Jenny looks slightly askance)**  
I know, terrible habit.

Jenny: No.

Andy: Anyway, if it's all right with you, I'd like to take it.

Jenny: **(brightly)** Super, great.

Andy: I'd like to move in as soon as possible- unless anyone else's coming round?

Jenny: No- there's no-one else. (but she doesn't sound totally thrilled)

Andy: Have we a deal? (She reaches out to shake hands and in doing so knocks over her tea) Shit, sorry!

Jenny: No trouble, it's fine. **(but obviously it isn't- she fusses off and gets a cloth)** It's okay, I can manage. **(Andy sits back. A rather awkward pause.)** So you're into science fiction?

Andy: A bit.

Jenny: Doctor Who?

Andy: Doctor Who, Star Trek, Babylon 5.

Jenny: I used to love Peter Davison, my hero.

Andy: I preferred Tom Baker.

Jenny: I was never that interested. **(another pause)** So, are you seeing anyone?

Andy: I'm getting a divorce actually.

Jenny: **(embarrassed)** Oh, God, I'm sorry.

Andy: Don't be, it's been a long time coming. That's why I need a place of my own you see, just while we sort the house out.

Jenny: I see.

Andy: It's okay.

Jenny: So what do you do?

Andy: I'm a lab technician. Up at the college.

Jenny: That must be interesting.

Andy: Not really. **(another pause)** So what do you do?

Jenny: I work as a copy writer. At an advertising agency.

Andy: That must be good.

Jenny: Not really.

Andy: Oh come on, are you like one of those people who comes up with those advertising jingles?

Jenny: Oh no, it's all very small scale not even a coffee percolator. **(she laughs)** The company I work for, AdA it's local, very small scale. Local papers and Yellow Pages, that sort of thing. 'Concrete your floor with Alan Moore'. That's one of mine. Not like my old company. Now that was something.

Andy: What was that?

Jenny: VenCo. **(wistfully)** London based. Big glass building. Canary Wharf.

Andy: I see.

Jenny: At one time I had Virgin. Monsoon and the National Trust on my 'list'.

Andy: Wow.

Jenny: Still. Times change.

Andy: What made you move up here?

Jenny: 'Lurve' (**she laughs deprecatingly**) I met the man of my dreams. Like you do. I did some work for the organisation he works for and that was that. Six months later up I jolly well came.

Andy: This is your fiasco?

Jenny: That's him.

Andy: So why aren't you living together.

Jenny: (**evasive**) Well, there were things to sort out and Ben, he wasn't sure, not at first. It's a big step.

Andy: Not as big as packing your job in.

Jenny: I suppose.

Andy: (**curious**) So what's stopping you now?

Jenny: Hang on, are you trying to do yourself out of a place to live?

Andy: Just interested.

Jenny: I dare say we will one of these days. More tea?

Andy: I'm fine thanks. This Ben, it wouldn't be Ben Aspinall? With the environment lot?

Jenny: You know him?

Andy: Of him. He's the friend of a friend. It's through him I got to hear about the flat.

**(Cut back to Ben)**

Ben: And it's not just the unpredictable risks to human health that scare me. Let me give you another example. The Soya plant, widely used by the food manufacturing industry. Vital, but not too hardy, you lose a lot through cultivation due to weeds. So you use herbicides, but not too much or you'll kill the crop. So what do you do? Simple, insert the gene of a bacterium, the gene which makes it resistant to herbicides and what do you get? A plant resistant to heavy spraying, lovely you say, more Soya, but also more spray soaking into the soil it's growing in. And what if the Soya cross pollinates with the weeds? Will they too become resistant to the spray designed to kill them? Who knows what might happen when we eat these genetically modified foods, remember no one predicted BSE. Besides all of this there's a wider question here, one which as humans we do need to address. We have this technology at our disposal, this marvellous technology, but have we the right to use it? Have we the right to tamper in this fundamental way with the very forces of creation?

## Blackout

### Scene two

**(A hubbub of noise, snatches of news broadcasts, radio links, chanting of protesters. Throughout all this melee we hear repeatedly the snatched phrase 'genetically modified crops'. The noise fades down and the lights come up on the flat. Jenny enters wearing a suit, work gear. She carries a glass of wine. With some relief she kicks her shoes off. Clearly she's very tired. With a sigh she sinks into a chair and curls up. Using the remote she turns on the TV, we hear the Eastenders theme music. She takes a swig of wine. This is obviously something she has been looking forward to doing for a long time. ) (Unseen by Jenny Ben enters wearing a mad carrot mask. He sneaks up behind the chair and jumps out on her. She shrieks, spilling some of her wine.)**

Jenny: My God.

Ben: Hello.

Jenny: You scared me half to death. **(she starts mopping up the wine)**

Ben: Don't I get a kiss? **(she pecks at him, still cleaning up but he responds whole heartedly and pushes her back in her chair. He takes the remote and turns off the TV, she looks annoyed at this but is too tired to make a fuss. They sit back together. Ben pulls out the mask.)** Good eh?

Jenny: What on earth is it?

Ben: A mad carrot.

Jenny: A what?

Ben: We've had a load made up, a tomato, a spud, a bean, we're going to wear them when we picket U-Save.

Jenny: When you what?

Ben: Picket U-Save. Not just U-Save, any shop that carries GM products.

Jenny: You are!

Ben: Not just us, it's all AWARE groups. **(standing on chair)** Carrots of the world unite!

Jenny: What's this about?

Ben: Jenny, where have you been for the last two days?

Jenny: Manchester, remember.

Ben: Haven't you seen the papers? Heard the news?

Jenny: Not really.

Ben: The latest row over GM.

Jenny: Oh?

Ben: The scientist in Scotland? Fed rats genetically modified potatoes and they got sick.

Jenny: Did they?

Ben: We've been deluged with phone calls. People wanting to know about GM.

Jenny: I see.

Ben: So we've decided to go right to the heart it.

Jenny: U-Save?

Ben: Where people actually buy their food.

Jenny: **(doubtfully)** Will they mind? The supermarkets?

Ben: They've no choice. We won't be on actual supermarket land, just outside the car parks.

Jenny: Wearing that?

Ben: Absolutely, it'll be brilliant.

Jenny: Won't it make you look.....

Ben: What?

Jenny: Well, a bit silly.

Ben: It'll grab their attention.

Jenny: And what are you going to do exactly?

Ben: **(grandly)** Ride the wave of popular concern.

Jenny: How?

Ben: Answer questions. Tell people a few facts. Encourage them to go elsewhere.

Jenny: Where?

Ben: Anywhere that's GM free. We've compiled a list.

Jenny: But there isn't anywhere in town.

Ben: There's Iceland in Shipley, that's GM free.

Jenny: But surely... well if the products are labelled, well they can make up their own minds.

Ben: Like they do with cigarettes?

Jenny: No.

Ben: **(over-riding)** Like they do with heroin?

Jenny: Of course not.

Ben: **(on a roll)** I tell you how nine people out of ten'll choose, they'll choose according to the price. People are like that Jenny.

Jenny: Surely.

Ben: And supermarkets like U-Save know that.

Jenny: But if at the end of the day they don't care, well, surely that's up to them.

Ben: But what we're doing them is educating them first.

Jenny: By wearing those masks.

Ben: **(annoyed, she's well and truly pissing on his fireworks)** Look, what's got into you tonight?

Jenny: **(Backing down immediately)** I'm sorry.

Ben: How else will we get people to listen?

Jenny: I know, I'm tired, just ignore me.

Ben: I mean surely you don't think it's right people should eat food containing the gene of a rat? That they should ingest antibiotics into their system without even knowing it.

Jenny: **(little girl)** I'm just very tired.

Ben: Why's that then?

Jenny: You know I've been driving to Manchester the last couple of days.

Ben: No I didn't.

Jenny: I did tell you.

Ben: Did you?

Jenny: Yes. I'm covering for someone at this agency over there, someone who's gone down with this 'flu bug.

Ben: You did say something. Any good?

Jenny: Apart from the M62.

Ben: **(looking at the paper)** It must be a real drag?

Jenny: Once I'm there it's actually okay, it's a much bigger set up than AdA.

Ben: Oh?

Jenny: More like VenCo... lovely big building, down Salford Quays... filter coffee, hurrah, hurrah!

Ben: How's it going with the new flat mate?

Jenny: Andy?

Ben: Andy? Rob said it was a she.

Jenny: Short for Andrea.

Ben: Ah.

Jenny: You didn't say you knew her.

Ben: I don't. Rob knows her. Of her.

Jenny: So she didn't reply to the box number?

Ben: Nope.

Jenny: There haven't been any other responses have there?

Ben: 'Fraid not. When's she moving in?

Jenny: The next couple of days.

Ben: You don't sound too excited.

Jenny: She's all right.

Ben: Just all right?

Jenny: Does Rob know her well?

Ben: I'm not sure.

Jenny: They do work together.

Ben: Do they?

Jenny: She works at the college.

Ben: I didn't know.

Jenny: Did he say why she was getting divorced?

Ben: I dunno, incompatible I guess. Why?

Jenny: I just wonder how we'll get on.

Ben: Why?

Jenny: I don't know, I guess I'm just being silly, she just seems a bit...

Ben: What?

Jenny: I just don't know how tidy she is, oh, ignore me I'm being paranoid.

Ben: You know the solution.

Jenny: Ben.

Ben: It's crazy running two places.

Jenny: It's just.

Ben: When are we going to get somewhere together?

Jenny: You were the one with the baggage.

Ben: That's all sorted now.

Jenny: I just feel.

Ben: I know- 'you need your own space'.

Jenny: For a while.

Ben: How long?

Jenny: A while. **(little girl)** I like my lickle flat.

Ben: You know what you need.

Jenny: No Daddy.

Ben: You need a jolly good smack.

Jenny: Do I?

Ben: You do.

Jenny: Do I?

Ben: Yes. **(He looks like he's about to fulfill his threat- but at that moment the front door opens)**

Andy: **(off-stage)** Hello?

Jenny: Andy.

Andy: **(entering)** Hi, is it okay if I come in? I had my key. I know I don't officially move in til tomorrow but I wanted to drop some stuff off.

Jenny: No, that's fine.

Ben: **(standing up)** Hi- I'm Ben.

Andy: Andy.

Ben: **(warmly)** Hello Andy.

### **Blackout**

### **Scene three**

**(A few weeks later. Andy is curled up reading, surrounded by a 'nest' of things, coke glass, magazines, paper, slippers. Jenny hurries in, taking off her coat and gloves.)**

Jenny: It's freezing. **(turns on the television)**

Andy: How was the M62.

Jenny: Don't ask-damn- I must've missed it.

Andy: What?

Jenny: 'Look North'. **(turns it off)** There was going to be a bit on the demo outside U-Save. Ben rang me to say. **(takes in the mess around Andy and her smile becomes somewhat fixed)**

Andy: I saw that.

Jenny: You didn't tape it by any chance.

Andy: Sorry, it was only on for a little bit.

Jenny: Ben said they were going to give it a real push today.

Andy: They did that.

Jenny: Good.

Andy: Very strident they were. Marching round with masks on, shouting.

Jenny: Good-oh.

Andy: It was like 'Night of the Killer Tomatoes'.

Jenny: They're only trying to get through to people.

Andy: They got through to the store manager all right, he looked well and truly pissed off.  
**(Jenny doesn't reply)** Good day?

Jenny: So so. **(she starts clearing the detritus)** You don't mind? I'm getting well and truly brassed off with the M62. But I'm really enjoying the work.

Andy: What's the account you're on with again?

Jenny: Salford Quays Mall, the out of town shopping centre.

Andy: That's right.

Jenny: It's one of the biggest they've had, that's why they wanted to send for someone with relevant experience.

Andy: Good on ya girl.

Jenny: It's going to be really nice.

Andy: I hate those places, all muzak and fountains people pee in.

Jenny: No, this one's really nice, it's designed like a French village. It's not just a load of shops covered over.

Andy: I like a town centre to walk round.

Jenny: But this is like a town centre, the way it's set out, all crooked streets and alleys. Just no rain, no traffic.

Andy: No atmosphere.

Jenny: No, it's not like that, there's a crèche for the kids, brilliant disabled access.

Andy: Okay, okay, it sounds brilliant.

Jenny: **(finishing)** There. I'll Hoover round later.

Andy: Do you believe in what you do? I mean the things you advertise.

Jenny: Oh yes, to some degree. I mean you have to, to do a really good job, that's what it's all about making people see what you see. I mean I have turned accounts down in the past, things I really can't relate to. Like I won't touch anything to do with military or defence. Anyway, I'm just going to get something to eat. You've eaten have you?

Andy: Yeah, ta. (**Jenny exits. Andy pulls a face and drags back her magazine and slippers. Jenny re-enters carrying a rather acky pan- guiltily Andy puts the magazine and slippers back.**)

Jenny: Andy.

Andy: Yeah?

Jenny: I'm not being funny, but did you leave this in the sink.

Andy: Oh yeah, I might've done. I'm really sorry, I was just about to wash up.

Jenny: You know this is my wok.

Andy: I thought it might be.

Jenny: It's the one I do my stir fry in.

Andy: I'm sorry, I didn't know.

Jenny: There is a label next to the hook.

Andy: Is there?

Jenny: 'Jenny's wok, veg only'.

Andy: I'm sorry, I'll clean it.

Jenny: Can I just ask what you were cooking in it

Andy: Spaghetti Bolognese. (**Jenny rolls her eyes**) Why?

Jenny: Using?

Andy: Well. Spaghetti.

Jenny: For the sauce.

Andy: The usual.

Jenny: What?

Andy: Mince. (**Jenny shuts her eyes in horror**) Onions, mushrooms, tomato puree. I may've sprinkled some crack cocaine on it, I forget. Look, what's the problem, I said I'll clean it.

Jenny: I'm not being funny.

Andy: So?

Jenny: So, mince beef.

Andy: Yeah?

Jenny: Beef. And was the tomato puree from U-Save by any chance?

Andy: Well, it might've been.

Jenny: Look Andy, we need to get this straight from the word go. I mean what you eat is entirely up to you, but I happen to be very careful with my diet. I mean for a start I'm a vegetarian, not one of these people who eats chicken and fish, but a full blown veggie. I happen not to like the taste of dead things, not even on pans and spoons and I certainly wouldn't eat meat that's been proven to rot holes in your brain.

Andy: Beef's all right now.

Jenny: Is it? I don't want to take that risk. And I certainly don't want to play Russian roulette with genetically modified tomato puree they're bad enough on their own. God knows what they'll do when they're mixed together.

Andy: Well, I've a bit of wind but I've not grown a second head just yet.

Jenny: You know perfectly well what I mean.

Andy: Well no actually, if you're saying BSE infected meat, which hopefully this wasn't and G.M tomatoes will magically make some sort of superbug, then that's crap.

Jenny: But is it though?

Andy: Jenny. BSE is an illness. Genetic modification is a way of breeding crops. It's like comparing 'flu with a greenhouse.

Jenny: Well I still don't choose to eat them. **(They realise they have come to an impasse, one where they have both reacted perhaps too strongly.)**

Andy: Look, I've said I'm sorry and I'll clean the pan.

Jenny: You just don't know what's safe to eat these days.

Andy: I've a bit of cardboard you should be all right with.

Jenny: It's beyond me how you can joke about it. I mean look at E. Coli, Salmonella, BSE.

Andy: **(firing back)** Yeah, and how many people do you know who've had them?

Jenny: You read about it all the time.

Andy: It's a very, very few and anyway G.M foods aren't like that.

Jenny: Aren't they?

Andy: No.

Jenny: How can you say that? I mean surely you don't think it's right people should ingest antibiotics into their system without even knowing it.

Andy: They don't.

Jenny: It's a proven fact that antibiotics are used in GM crops.

Andy: Antibiotic resistant genes.

Jenny: Same difference.

Andy: Well no actually.

Jenny: Look, I'm not being funny but I've read the research Ben gets. I mean the stuff that goes on it makes your hair stand on end.

Andy: Jenny, I work in a science lab, I do know what I'm talking about.

Jenny: I mean when it comes to eating the gene of a rat.

Andy: You won't be.

Jenny: Won't I?

Andy: No you won't. Look Jen, there's three G.M products currently available in some, repeat some, supermarkets. There's your maize and your Soya, which have been given a bacterium gene to make them more resistant to herbicide. And there's your tomato, which hasn't even been given a gene, it's had one 'switched off', the one that starts the rotting process so it'll last longer. And they've all been stringently tested. I mean we're talking years here, before they've even got within a whiff of a supermarket.

Jenny: It just feels wrong the whole process.

Andy: Don't get me wrong, I entirely agree.

Jenny: **(interrupting)** Besides, Ben says.

Andy: Never mind what Ben says. I heard what Ben says on 'Look North' what do you say?

Jenny: Well, the same of him of course. **(exits)**

## Blackout

(A chanting comes up which fades into.)

### Scene four

(The car park at U-Save. A raw windy day. We hear shouting and chanting offstage. Jenny enters rather furtively, wincing at a particularly loud outburst of shouting. She is obviously suffering from a heavy cold. She waves, attracting someone's attention. Ben bounds in, full of energy holding a placard and carrot mask.)

Ben: Hi.

Jenny: Hello.

Ben: Why didn't you come over?

Jenny: You all looked really busy.

Ben: Hang on, I'll just tell them where I am. Hold these. **(He thrusts the placard and mask into her hands and sprints off. Jenny looks in embarrassment at what she's been given to hold and puts them down out of sight. She skims through one of the leaflets. Ben sprints back and takes the placard.)** Just in case anyone comes.

Jenny: Shall we move out of the wind a bit?

Ben: Better not, if we stay here we can catch anyone going to the bottle bank.

Jenny: Hot sweet coffee at your service sir.

Ben: Bless you. **(he pours himself a cup)** Are you okay then?

Jenny: A bit of a cold coming on you know.

Ben: **(gulping the coffee down)** Fresh air's the best thing for it.

Jenny: You think? **(There's a burst of shouting offstage)**

Ben: **(energised by this)** It's going really well.

Jenny: You all seem to be out in force.

Ben: Since 'Look North' and that 'Panorama' thing we've had loads of interest. And today's been brill, Saturday shoppers out in force, people asking questions.

Jenny: Good, good.

Ben: Loads have boycotted the store. People are really receptive to what we're saying.

Jenny: How have the supermarket been?

Ben: Not impressed. But there's not a lot they can do. Council owned car park see.

Jenny: Right.

Ben: We had the police sniffing round on day one but we ended up telling them all about it. We've had no bother since then.

Jenny: I was reading your leaflet.

Ben: Good eh?

Jenny: It was saying about fish genes being added to tomatoes.

Ben: So.

Jenny: Well, surely that's not really accurate.

Ben: **(not really listening)** We don't know that.

Jenny: Andy was saying they just 'switched a gene off', not added anything.

Ben: But you can't get away from the fact they are modified. That's the crucial thing.

Jenny: I suppose.

Ben: We are right Jen, that's what's important.

Jenny: More coffee?

Ben: Please. Don't you want some?

Jenny: I'll have some when I get home.

Ben: So how's it going with the famous Andy?

Jenny: Fine.

Ben: All working out okay?

Jenny: Yes.

Ben: Are you sure?

Jenny: Why?

Ben: I just happened to have a look in the kitchen this morning when I left.

Jenny: Ah.

Ben: Bit of a stranger to the old dish cloth isn't she?

Jenny: I have said something. And she is making an effort. It's all sorted.

Ben: It didn't look like it to me.

Jenny: It is.

Ben: Of course if you wanted her to leave.

Jenny: **(trying to make a joke out of it)** She's only just moved in. **(changing the subject)**  
Anyway work's good.

Ben: Oh?

Jenny: I'm really enjoying it. Being back somewhere, well with something going on in it.

Ben: Don't get used to it.

Jenny: Yesterday I got told how well I was doing. I managed to bag the best billboards on the M62. Gold star for little me.

Ben: It's only till this bloke comes back.

Jenny: I suppose.

Ben: Anyway you've said what a real drag it is with all that travelling.

Jenny: Yes.

Ben: I want my little girl home at a reasonable hour.

Jenny: **(little girl)** Yes Daddy.

Ben: Tell you what, I'll make one of my famous curries tonight and we'll watch that Polish film I video'd.

Jenny: That'll be nice. **(Ben's mobile rings)**

Ben: **(into phone)** Ben Aspinall. Oh? Yeah? What? That's brilliant Danuta! Yeah- I'll pass it on to the others right away. **(He rings off)**

Jenny: Good news?

Ben: That was Danuta, in the office. It's just been on local radio, the Council have announced a ban on GM products in council run homes and schools.

Jenny: Oh- great.

Ben: And Carlton Bolling college have rung, they want us to give a talk to their sixth formers on the subject.

Jenny: Well done.

Ben: After all those months of poxy little groups two or three people in some church hall, finally people are listening. **(there is a renewed burst of chanting offstage. He catches her hands, alight with excited and enthusiasm. There is something very 'boyish' and appealing about him. Jenny smiles.)** Look, I must just tell the others. Jen, be an angel.

Jenny: What?

Ben: Just wave this about a bit, if anyone comes past give them one of these.

Jenny: But Ben!

Ben: I won't be a sec. **(he sprints out leaving Jenny uncertainly holding the banner)**

## **Blackout**

### **Scene five**

**(A couple of days later. Jenny sits coughing in a chair. She does not look at all well. She looks at herself in a hand mirror and pulls a wry face.)**

Jenny: Mirror, mirror on the wall.

Andy: **(entering)** Who's the sweatiest one of all? Here. **(she hands her a drink)**

Jenny: Thanks.

Andy: How' you feeling?

Jenny: Okay really.

Andy: You look like a ton of shit.

Jenny: Thanks.

Andy: It must be that 'flu bug, you didn't go in did you?

Jenny: No, though I should've... big launch today.

Andy: **(singing)** Salford Quay, the place to be. **(Jenny smiles weakly)**

Jenny: Anyway. Come on Jennifer. Stir your stumps.

Andy: What for? You should be in bed.

Jenny: Work, work, work.

Andy: What. Work, work, work?

Jenny: Just something I've got to do.

Andy: Like what? You have rung in sick?

Jenny: Yes, it's not work, work. Just something I said I'd type up for Ben. His talk for the colleges.

Andy: Let him type up his own talk.

Jenny: **(laughing feebly)** Have you seen the speed at which he types?

Andy: Jenny, you're not well.

Jenny: I'm okay.

Andy: Yeah and I'm Delia Smith.

Jenny: Ha, ha. **(The phone rings. Andy picks it up. Jenny gets up and starts sorting some papers to type.)**

Andy: I haven't finished with you. **(into phone)** Hello, five six treble four three. Oh right, yes she is. **(To Jenny)** It's for you. Sam from the office.

Jenny: Right. **(takes the phone)** Hi Sam. A bit. I'm hoping to be back in next week. **(A snort from Andy)** How did the launch go? Brilliant. Great. I'm really pleased. Did Vera Duckworth finally make it after all that? Great... did he? How sweet. Oh? Who? No, don't know him. Did he say who he was with? Very intriguing. Yes by all means. I can't see myself going out. Better give him the mobile too just in case. 0891 472 472. Seven, two... yeah- oh, okay- right- bye **(To Andy)** Very mysterious. Strange men wanting my number. **(Ben enters)**

Andy: Speaking of which.

Ben: Hallo, hallo, hallo.

Jenny: Hi.

Ben: **(seeing the talk papers she's got out ready)** Great, have you done it?

Jenny: I'm just about to.

Andy: Only she's not well.

Jenny: I'm fine.

Ben: Well it is somewhat urgento.

Jenny: I'm doing it now.

Ben: Hang on; we need to take out the bit about tomatoes- put in something else a bit more dramatic.

Andy: Dramatic?

Ben: It turns out they're not putting in genes at all, just mucking about with what's already there.

Andy: Never.

Ben: I've some notes here about the flounder gene being put into strawberries, but we really need to get our skates on, I want to show this to Danuta first thing.

Jenny: I'll just get the laptop. **(exits)**

Andy: Look Ben.

Ben: **(concentrating on his notes)** Mmm hmm?

Andy: Jenny's not at all well you know.

Ben: You said.

Andy: She's gone down with this 'flu bug that's been going round she was up all night coughing, she's not been at work today. **(Jenny re-enters)**

Ben: What's this I'm hearing?

Jenny: Honestly, I'm fine. Just a bit feverish that's all.

Andy: Yeah, with a temperature of 102.

Ben: Look, are you okay?

Jenny: I've taken a couple of aspirins, I'll be fine.

Andy: You will be if you go to bed.

Ben: Look, are you or are you not okay?

Jenny: **(firmly)** I'm fine. **(Ben shrugs at Andy with the air of one with a problem solved)**

Andy: Jenny, you're not well.

Ben: Surely she's the best judge of that?

Jenny: **(exasperated)** I'm okay.

Ben: Anyway, the sooner we make a start, the sooner we'll finish.

Jenny: Right. **(she takes up the folder and reads)** You, your food and GM crops, by Ben Aspinall BSc.

Andy: **(muttering)** BSE.

Jenny: **(brightly, to cover up this)** Ever such a lot of people have been talking about G.M at work.

Ben: Good, good.

Jenny: Samantha showed me her newspaper.

Ben: Oh?

Jenny: It said we'd all been eating GM food for years.

Ben: We probably have.

Jenny: And there's this village in Lincolnshire near where they grow GM stuff anyway apparently loads of people have had food poisoning.

Ben: I hope you told her to go to one of the AWARE talks.

Andy: I hope you told her it was a load of bollocks.

Ben: Sorry?

Andy: Well come on. I mean that's just scare mongering.

Ben: Is it?

Andy: Yes.

Ben: There were a lot of rumours about BSE, an awful lot, and look how many of them came true.

Andy: And look how many were pure crap.

Ben: Are you saying there isn't any reason to worry?

Andy: Far from it. I'm saying scaring people witless won't help them make up their mind.

Ben: But Andy, that's exactly what it will do.

Andy: How d'you work that out?

Ben: Why have we never used the nuclear bomb? Because people are scared. Why have we cut down use of CFCs? Because people are scared.

Andy: But GM crops won't punch holes in the ozone layer.

Ben: Can you say to me categorically that genetically modification of crops is without risk?

Andy: No I'm not.

Ben: There you are then.

Andy: But it's not as simple as that.

Ben: Isn't it?

Andy: No.

Ben: **(over riding her)** It seems simple enough to me, is it risk free or isn't it?

Andy: Well no, but the point is.

Ben: The point is it isn't risk free. It's a scary subject Andy and I think people have the right to be scared, don't you?

Andy: I don't think.

Ben: Look, I'm not being funny but I really do need to get on. I mean there's nothing more I'd like than to talk with you about this, really, and the sooner we start the sooner Jenny can get some rest.

Jenny: **(who has been watching this exchange nervously)** I'm all right. Why does everyone insist I'm at death's door? **(coughs)**

Andy: Tell you what, why don't I type up the report?

Jenny: I'm fine.

Andy: I'm serious. I take it you won't mind if I type the report so Jenny can get to bed?

Ben: Can you type?

Andy: **(deliberately vague)** A bit.

Jenny: I'm perfectly capable of doing it.

Ben: I do need it done tonight.

Andy: It will be. Anyway, **(she smiles)** it might help inform my arguments a bit.

Ben: If you want to.

Andy: Right, that's settled.

Jenny: Andy.

Andy: Bed. Now. **(Uneasy but too knackered to argue Jenny shrugs and goes.)**

Ben: **(after her)** I'll look in later. **(Jenny exits)**

Andy: Now. **(she sits at the computer)**

Ben: You know how to use one of these things?

Andy: A bit. **(She pauses and Ben looks at her, wondering whether this was such a good idea)**

Ben: You need to double click on the blue 'W'.

Andy: Ah.

Ben: You do know how to use it?

Andy: Did Jenny tell you what I do?

Ben: Something up at the college.

Andy: Something. **(she begins typing like the wind)**

Ben: Ah, I get it. You work in the office. **(patronising tone)**

Andy: Thank you kind sir. **(she types, smiling at Ben's surprise. At a loss Ben walks around the room)** So where did you get your degree?

Ben: Sorry?

Andy: Ben Aspinall BSc, where did you get it?

Ben: Leeds Met.

Andy: What in?

Ben: Sorry?

Andy: BSc. What was the 'sc.'? Physics? Biology?

Ben: Political science actually.

Andy: Ah!

Ben: Ah what?

Andy: So you're not a scientist.

Ben: I've done research. Why did you say it like that?

Andy: Like what?

Ben: Like you did.

Andy: Sorry. I didn't realise I'd said it like anything, listen, could you read this bit for me? You're handwriting's a bit...is this.... 'fields of sudden illuminations'?

Ben: Abominations. Fields of swollen abominations.

Andy: A-ha. Fields of swollen abominations. **(she continues and then tuts)**

Ben: My writing's not that bad.

Andy: No?

Ben: Jenny never has any trouble reading it.

Andy: You've spelt creation wrong. And Armageddon has a double d.

Ben: Are you sure?

Andy: Can I just read this back to you. Make sure it's correct. 'A plant Armageddon, the logical result of tampering with the forces of creation'.

Ben: That's fine.

Andy: As has been happening for centuries. **(continues typing)**

Ben: Sorry?

Andy: Well surely farming's always been about just that. "Tampering with the forces of creation". Fertilisation, crop rotation, cross breeding, all been going on for God knows how long all as 'natural' as battery hens.

Ben: You can hardly equate tampering with the genes of a plant with a bit of muck spreading

Andy: So what about cross breeding? The Ancient Egyptians did that.

Ben: So?

Andy: It's just a very crude form of genetic modification isn't it? Combine the pollen of two plants, get the best qualities of both.

Ben: I know what cross breeding is.

Andy: Then you'll know it can produce some pretty good 'swollen abominations' of its own, celery that burns the skin, toxic potatoes at least G.M's more exact.

Ben: You seem to know an awful lot about it.

Andy: I read an article about it.

Ben: Where?

Andy: **(vaguely)** Some magazine.

Ben: Which magazine.

Andy: You know I can't just remember the name.

Ben: **(playing into her hands)** Doctor Who monthly?

Andy: New something was it?

Ben: News of the World?

Andy: Scientist. 'New Scientist', that's it.

Ben: 'New Scientist'?

Andy: Yes, though you might not have come across it, not being a scientist, strictly speaking. Here. **(she hands it to him)** Page 53. We get it at work. Which incidentally isn't the office, it's the science labs. Now where was I? **(begins typing)** The whole process flies in the face of nature.

## Blackout

### Scene six

**(Jenny sits in a chair looking washed out but a bit better. She is reflectively going through an old photograph album, perhaps labelled 'Tuscany '97' or something. The phone rings. She tenses and looks at it.)**

Andy: **(Offstage)** Shall I get that?

Jenny: It's okay. **(She snatches it up and immediately replaces the receiver. After a second she dials 1471 and writes down a number. She leaves the phone off the hook. She is sitting staring at the number when Andy enters with a tray of food.)**

Andy: Who was it?

Jenny: I don't know. They rang off.

Andy: D'you dial 1471?

Jenny: They withheld their number.

Andy: Probably a genetically modified carrot making hate calls.

Jenny: **(not laughing)** They'll call back if it was important.

Andy: They won't if you don't replace the receiver. **(She does so. She looks at Jenny who won't meet her eyes. Throughout the next Jenny keeps glancing uneasily at the phone.)** Now, here we are, and before you ask, yes, totally 100% meat free, GM free, totally organic and made in your own special pan.

Jenny: Thanks.

Andy: I even sprinkled some soil over it. (**Jenny smiles weakly**) How are you feeling?

Jenny: Okay.

Andy: You're looking a bit better.

Jenny: I feel washed out.

Andy: You look washed out.

Jenny: Thanks.

Andy: Which is definitely a step up from a ton of shit. What did the Doctor say?

Jenny: To give it a few days.

Andy: Well you were pretty ill. These things take time. Did he give you anything?

Jenny: No.

Andy: That's no good.

Jenny: They don't these days. Just tell you to sit it out.

Andy: You should demand drugs gal.

Jenny: They're trying not to give antibiotics apparently. They say the more we have the less effective they are.

Andy: True, but then you still feel like shit warmed up.

Jenny: Ben says all these antibiotics on GM crops aren't helping.

Andy: Jenny.

Jenny: (**weakly defending him**) They do put them on.

Andy: No, what they put on are antibiotic resistant genes.

Jenny: (**knackered and not very interested**) it's the same thing.

Andy: No it's not actually; these things are only active in plants.

Jenny: (**wearily**) It's what Ben said.

Andy: I bet he's been blaming Kosovo on GM as well.

Jenny: D' you know. I just wish everyone'd stop going on about it for five minutes. I'm sorry, I'm not being funny but I'm sick to death of the whole bloody subject. **(There is a pause. Jenny eats in silence. The phone rings. Jenny almost hits the ceiling. Andy picks it up)**

Andy: Hello? **(Jenny looks at her tensely)** Oh, hi Ben. Yes she is, I'll pass her over.

Jenny: Hi. Yes, okay, I'm hoping to be back at work by the end of the week, but I'll see how I feel. The Doctor said to give it a few days. No, I haven't. I meant it do it this afternoon but I fell asleep, tomorrow definitely. Yes, I know it's important. It'll be done. Listen Ben, I've had some news, oh sorry, yes, of course, no I understand, it can wait... What time? I might be in bed... just wake me... okay. Love you, love you. Bye. **(She puts down the receiver)** He said 'hi'.

Andy: Hi back. You've not typed his talk I gather.

Jenny: Not yet.

Andy: Throw it over, I'll do it.

Jenny: No, that's all right.

Andy: I know it is. **(She gets the lap top)**

Jenny: **(Looking at her food)** Thanks. This is really nice by the way.

Andy: It'd be nicer if you actually ate some.

Jenny: Sorry. I've no appetite.

Andy: It's okay. **(They smile at each other, peace made)** Ben in a hurry then?

Jenny: Sorry?

Andy: You wanted to tell him something.

Jenny: Oh, yes. He's really busy. Three groups he spoke to today. Three, and all packed out apparently. And there's talk of a Yorkshire TV documentary.

Andy: He'll be made up.

Jenny: Yes. Yes he is. I mean I know it's a worrying thing, but... well, it's been good for him.

Andy: It's an ill wind.

Jenny: He's done so well giving talks, interviews... he's...really motivated about work... more than he's ever been, ever since I've known him. You see he's always had, always, this need to do well. To succeed. He's one of three, very clever parents, barristers. Brother's both Doctors and him, well he's the only one in his family who didn't go to Oxbridge, so he's always felt like.

Andy: He's had to prove something.

Jenny: Why, I've no idea. I mean he's a lot cleverer than me for a start, not that that's saying much.

Andy: Don't do yourself down.

Jenny: No, honestly, if you could've seen me, before I met him. Going on from day to day. Head full of rubbish. What wine bar to go to. Some trashy book I was reading. Then I met Ben. I mean I've learnt so much from him.

Andy: So why didn't you two move in together when you first came up here from London?

Jenny: He was already living with someone and it took a while for them to sort themselves out. I mean it was all over.

Andy: Did she know that?

Jenny: It was as far as Ben was concerned but she was very clingy, didn't want to let go.

Andy: I see.

Jenny: It was only really finally done and dusted a few months ago. You know, the mortgage and everything.

Andy: Did you know about this?

Jenny: Oh yes. I mean not totally, but I knew there had been someone. He said he was afraid if he'd told me the full story I wouldn't come.

Andy: And would you?

Jenny: Oh yes.

Andy: All the same, not what you planned.

Jenny: What ever is? I thought everything'd be so different, but you always do. When you get a new job. Go on holiday. And sometimes it is. But often it isn't. It's just the same. When I first came up here we went out on a walk, up the Dales. There was I slithering about in my silly little ankle boots, it was so lovely and we said we'd go out there again and again. But somehow we never did. **(recovering from her reverie)** Anyway, it suits us both. How we are now. **(a pause)** I'm sorry I snapped at you.

Andy: It's okay.

Jenny: I can't think what got into me.

Andy: You're knackered.

Jenny: Well that as well...

Andy: And?

Jenny: There's something else. It's been weighing on my mind a bit.

Andy: Oh?

Jenny: It's what I want to talk to Ben about.

Andy: Anything to do with all those wrong numbers that keep calling us?

Jenny: Sort of. Someone's trying to ring me, but I need to speak to Ben first.

Andy: About what?

Jenny: Well, I've been offered a job.

Andy: Great.

Jenny: At the agency in Manchester.

Andy: That's brilliant.

Jenny: Not really.

Andy: Why not? You like working there.

Jenny: It's not that.

Andy: You can still commute, or you can get somewhere halfway.

Jenny: It's not that. It's the account they'd want me to handle.

Andy: Which is?

Jenny: U-Save.

## **Blackout**

### **Scene seven**

**(The two girls are sat watching a video of 'Doctor Who: The Seeds of Doom'. Both are curled up with cushions. We hear snatches of dialogue)**

Scientist: These aren't blood platelets.

Doctor Who: Do you recognise them?

Scientist: They look like schizophites.

Doctor Who: Exactly.

Scientist: I don't believe it, it's not possible.

Sarah Jane: Would someone mind explaining to me just what these schizophites are?

Scientist: The smallest known living organisms, plant bacteria.

**(The phone rings. Jenny tenses and looks at it. Andy pauses the tape and looks at her Eventually answers the phone.)**

Andy: Five six treble four three. No, I'm sorry, she's out, can I take a message? Okay, I'll get her to ring you back when she gets in. Okay, thanks. **(she replaces the receiver)** They're very keen to get in touch.

Jenny: I'll call them tomorrow.

Andy: That's what you said yesterday.

Jenny: I will.

Andy: If you're going to turn it down you should say. **(Jenny doesn't respond)** Have you talked to Ben about it again?

Jenny: Not properly. He's been rushed off his feet.

Andy: But this is important.

Jenny: I will when he comes round.

**(Andy starts the video again. We hear another snatch of dialogue)**

Sarah Jane: Plant bacteria in someone's blood stream?

Doctor Who: Interesting, isn't it? A human being whose blood is turning into vegetable soup.

**(Ben breezes in)**

Ben: Hallo, hallo, hallo.

Andy: Hi.

Ben: What on earth's this.

Andy: Doctor Who and the Seeds of Doom.

Ben: Oh my God.

Andy: Borrow it for your talk if you want.

Ben: Ha, ha.

Jenny: Ben.

Andy: I'll make myself scarce.

Ben: No, I want you here.

Andy: Sorry?

Ben: Never let it be said that I don't open myself to all shades of public opinion. My talk. **(to Jenny)** You said I could practice it. **(To Andy)** And I want you to listen. To get the opinion of a proper scientist.

Andy: Okay.

Ben: Prepare to be informed, entertained and scared.

Andy: You are going to use the video.

Ben: Do I hear the voice of a disaffected minority?

Andy: Minority?

Ben: Four colleges, three papers a radio station and one town council.

Andy: You think I'm pro GM don't you.

Ben: Aren't you?

Jenny: Ben, before you start.

Ben: What?

Jenny: There's something I want to talk to you about.

Ben: Jen.

Jenny: This won't take a minute.

Andy: My cue to do the washing up.

Ben: Pans in the sink again?

Andy: 'Fraid so.

Ben: You'll have Jenny on your back.

Andy: Hardly.

Jenny: They're my pans actually. **(Andy exits)**

Ben: How are you feeling anyway?

Jenny: Okay.

Ben: You're still looking peaky.

Jenny: So I've been told.

Ben: I know we've hardly seen each other lately, but it should all calm down a bit when these talks are out of the way.

Jenny: Yes.

Ben: How's it all going anyway?

Jenny: All right.

Ben: All right?

Jenny: She was really kind to me when I was ill.

Ben: You know I'd 've looked after you.

Jenny: I know.

Ben: Anyway, you wanted to talk.

Jenny: Yes.

Ben: Fire away.

Jenny: Well it's just this, the ad agency has phoned again.

Ben: The one in Manchester?

Jenny: Yes.

Ben: And?

Jenny: Well, I just wanted to talk it through with you.

Ben: What's there to say?

Jenny: Well.

Ben: I mean I thought you were going to say no.

Jenny: Yes.

Ben: So what is there to talk through?

Jenny: Only. Well, it's a big chance.

Ben: A big chance to promote GM crops.

Jenny: Not exactly.

Ben: No?

Jenny: Not entirely.

Ben: Would it or would it not be working for U-Save?

Jenny: Sort of.

Ben: Sort of.

Jenny: It's more than that. I mean they're really keen on me, they got my CV up from London and everything.

Ben: But it would be working for U-save.

Jenny: Sort of.

Ben: Yes or no.

Jenny: Well yes.

Ben: So?

Jenny: It'd just be a chance to stretch me.

Ben: By promoting GM food. Yes?

Jenny: Yes.

Ben: Look, I'm not being funny, but can we get on. I mean as you're not going to take it where's the point in talking about it? I mean you are going to refuse it?

Jenny: Yes. **(More definitely)** Yes, I suppose.

Ben: **(calling)** Andy.

Andy: Talk done?

Ben: Talk done, and could you bring in a jug of water with you?

Andy: A what?

Ben: A jug of water.

Jenny: Use the plastic measuring jug, second from right in the third cupboard along.

Andy: Approximately.

Jenny: **(seeing her chance disappearing)** Look I know you think GM's terrible.

Ben: Don't you?

Jenny: I've been reading a bit about what the food companies want to do.

Ben: Apart from ruin the Eco system.

Jenny: **(pressing on)** Developing better crops, more of them.

Ben: Which grow in sunny meadows where bunnies hop and children pick flowers.

Jenny: Ben.

Ben: Look Jen, I'm not really interested. I'm not being awful but I've done my research, I've formed my opinions. Now, if you don't mind- the talk? I need to get this right.

Jenny: Sorry.

Andy: **(enters with jug)** Good talk?

Ben: Fine thanks. Now, make yourself comfortable.

Andy: What is this again?

Ben: My talk for the sixth form college.

Andy: And you're sure you want me here?

Ben: Absolutely, I may be only a political scientist but I have done my research. I just want to make sure I get it right.

Andy: I'm all ears.

Ben: Okay. **(he takes a water pistol from his bag)** Genetic modification. Part one. The process. How we insert genes into plants works and how it's playing Russian roulette with nature. **(he puts green food coloring into the water and fills the water pistol)**

Jenny: What's that for?

Ben: You'll see.

Andy: I've a cap gun somewhere.

Ben: That won't be necessary thank you. **(he skims his notes)** Okay boys and girls, let me just demonstrate to you in simple terms how the process of genetic modification

works and let you judge for yourself whether or not the process is accurate and reliable. Take a gene. To be effective the gene has to enter the DNA of a plant. If it doesn't enter the DNA at a suitable point then it may just be useless, or more worrying, cause the other genes to react in an unpredictable and maybe dangerous way producing toxins, carcinogens. **(Andy opens her mouth but he over rides her)** we just don't know.

**(pointedly)**

Even scientists can't say it's a risk free process. Anyway our specific gene is extracted from the plant and put into what is known as a gene gun and here is our gene gun. **(he brandishes the water pistol)** .This gun is then fired at the plant cells, quite simple you might think, but unfortunately the process is completely unpredictable, so you have no way of knowing at which point of the DNA the gene will enter. So Andy if we assume you're our plant cells it could be anywhere here, or here, or here. **(he fires the pistol at Andy's feet and then her head)**

Jenny: Ben.

Ben: **(laughing)** I'm sorry Andy.

Andy: **(smiling good humouredly)** No, that's okay.

Ben: You had to admit it is effective.

Andy: Very graphic.

Ben: I'm sorry.

Andy: And fairly accurate.

Ben: Thank you, now.

Andy: Er, if I may come back at you, on one or two minor points.

Ben: Sure.

Andy: First each plant cell is just a container for the DNA, say this room is the cell and you're the DNA there's a good chance the shots might miss the DNA altogether. And as you say there's no way of knowing where on the DNA sequence the gene will hit. So they don't fire one gene, but lots and lots of genes. **(she fires the pistol repeatedly at Ben)** only all at the same time.

Jenny: You asked for that.

Ben: This is a clean shirt.

Andy: Then they develop the cells that are altered into plants to see which if any express the gene in the way they want and if there aren't any unforeseen side effects. So out of say ten thousand cells they only may develop one or two into full-blown plants. It's a long, long painstaking process.

Ben: Which you have to admit is unpredictable.

Andy: Which is why the ones which don't work are thrown away.

Ben: As I said. Unpredictable.

Andy: Well.

Ben: **(Over-riding her)** Yes or no.

Andy: Yes, but.

Ben: I rest my case.

Andy: As I was trying to say, it's a damn sight more predictable than cross breeding.

Ben: At least that's natural.

Andy: Is it- but if I may demonstrate- there you get the millions of genes from one plant **(takes the water)** and the millions of genes from another **(puts in her Coca-Cola)** and mix them together in one plant **(she tips the mix over Ben's head)** which might well end up being an absolute monstrosity.

Ben: I suppose you think that's funny.

Andy: No, just intensely satisfying.

Ben: I was trying to paint an accurate picture in simple terms.

Andy: With rubber masks and water pistols?

Ben: If that's what it takes to get through to people. Look, I know you think this is just some power trip I'm on, but I really do believe it's a worrying issue.

Andy: And it's a lot more worrying when people like you get involved.

Ben: You mean people opposed to it.

Andy: No, I mean non scientists.

Ben: We're not back to this again? Look, I do know about the subject.

Andy: But you don't know about the scientific process. It's long, it's involved, it's bloody tortuous, it's not something you can explain in a few glib sound bytes, like you can't recount the plot of East Enders over the last five years in three sentences. Take one question, you say is simple. 'Is GM safe'?

Ben: I agree it's simple, which is why I worry when I don't get a straight answer.

Andy: It's because there is no straight simple answer. I mean you say GM food, you mean all GM products or just one? You mean before processing or after? It takes test after test after test to come up with just one part of the answer to that question, it's like you saying 'are all characters in Eastenders good, yes or no?' Some are good, some are bad, some are both; it depends a whole load of things.

Ben: But you said yourself, there are risks.

Andy: Yes, but there are risks with anything new.

Ben: Exactly.

Andy: Which is why we need to find out, why we need honest, debate and we're not going to get that scaring people.

Ben: Informing.

Andy: Not informing, it's not informing to show Grant pushing Tiffany downstairs and saying 'here we are folks, humanity'. That's what you're doing, you and your friends. **(she exits)**

Ben: Oh dear!

Jenny: Ben.

Ben: I've tried Jen, I have really, really tried with that girl. But. Well let's be honest. It's not working is it?

Jenny: Andy's okay.

Ben: She may be, but would you say we were getting on?

Jenny: **(sighing)** No.

Ben: **(taking her hand)** And am I your fiancée?

Jenny: Yes.

Ben: **(gently)** So you admit there's a problem.

Jenny: I think that.

Ben: **(gently)** Yes or no?

Jenny: Yes.

Ben: She needs to go Jen.

Jenny: Ben.

Ben: I've tried, really I have.

Jenny: Ben.

Ben: I mean at the end of the day is it reasonable for me to expect that every time I come round? I'm serious Jen, if she stays, you're going to be seeing a lot less of me.

### **Blackout**

### **Scene eight**

**(Andy enters with a case and a holdall, which she sets down. She sighs and looks round the room. She sees a video on the side and puts it in the top of the bag. Jenny enters.)**

Jenny: Well.

Andy: Well.

Jenny: This is it I suppose.

Andy: Indeed.

Jenny: It's been really great, you being here.

Andy: Thanks.

Jenny: And, I'm sorry if at times.

Andy: Yes?

Jenny: I've been, well, a bit fussy.

Andy: You haven't. Anyway, I know I can be a mucky cow.

Jenny: No, anyway.

Andy: I've put that video in.

Jenny: Oh?

Andy: The one we were halfway through. The Seeds of Doom.

Jenny: **(smiling)** Right. Thanks. I'll send it back when I've watched it.

Andy: No great rush. **(the phone rings. Jenny and Andy exchange glances and Jenny picks it up)**

Jenny: Five six treble four three? Yes? Yes it is still vacant. Yes, do call round **(she looks questioningly at Andy who nods)** Tonight after six? Yes that should be fine. Okay, Sarah Wall, okay Sarah, I won't see you then but the girl living here will. Bye. **(she replaces the receiver)** That's the third.

Andy: I'll be spoilt for choice.

Jenny: And the ad only went in last week. When I think of those months with no one interested...

Andy: Anyway, hadn't you better be making tracks?

Jenny: I suppose, goodbye **(they hug, unnoticed Ben enters. They break and she sees him. )**

Ben: Hello.

Jenny: Ben.

Ben: I wanted to say goodbye.

Jenny: I see.

Ben: Is that allowed.

Jenny: As long as that's all it is.

Andy: I'll leave you two to it. **(to Jenny)** Ring me when you get there.

Jenny: I will, bye Andy. **(Andy exits)**

Ben: So this is it?

Jenny: Yes

Ben: I can't believe you're doing this.

Jenny: Ben.

Ben: Throwing away what we had.

Jenny: Ben.

Ben: Just answer me one thing Jen.

Jenny: We've been through all this.

Ben: Please- one thing.

Jenny: **(sighing)** What?

Ben: Do you love me?

Jenny: Ben.

Ben: Yes or no?

Jenny: Ben. **(her tone stops him short)** This isn't a debate.

Ben: What do you mean?

Jenny: You can't trap me into saying what you want me to.

Ben: It's a simple question.

Jenny: No. No it isn't. I say 'yes' I love you, you say why are you going' I say 'because I want to go'.

Ben: So say 'no'.

Jenny: **(quietly)** That's not true either.

Ben: You see.

Jenny: I see there is no easy answer. I'm going because I want to go. Because it's something I want to do.

Ben: I love you.

Jenny: I know. I'm sorry Ben. **(an awkward pause, there's nothing to say but neither of them wants to leave it like that. Ben notices the books.)**

Ben: What's all that?

Jenny: Just some books.

Ben: **(reading titles)** G.M. the facts. Frankenstein foods, good or bad?

Jenny: No black or white answers Ben, and then, black or white. No cons. Only pros. **(he looks at her- obviously she's said something significant)** Goodbye Ben.

**(He doesn't look up and she exits. He stands there a long moment and Andy enters watching him)**

Andy: **(gently)** Do you want a coffee?

Ben: No.

Andy: I am sorry Ben.

Ben: Are you?

Andy: Yes.

Ben: I thought you'd be rejoicing.

Andy: I'm sure you did.

Ben: I mean you've got everything you wanted? **(Andy sighs and makes to go)** I love her you know.

Andy: I know you do.

Ben: We were fine till you came along.

Andy: It's a pity she didn't get another flat mate then. **(he looks at her)**

Ben: I'm not stopping. I just wanted to collect my folders.

Andy: Okay, I put them on the side for you.

Ben: I'm surprised you haven't burnt them. **(she moves to get them)** She won't be happy.

Andy: No?

Ben: She must have said to you how meaningless her old life was.

Andy: This isn't her old life.

Ben: It amounts to the same thing. Working in a flashy place.

Andy: I think it's about more than escalators and filter coffee Ben.

Ben: Surely you don't think she believes in what she's doing.

Andy: Don't you?

Ben: She's going directly against her beliefs.

Andy: Or directly against your beliefs.

Ben: You would say that. The folders please.

Andy: **(not moving)** You know who you remind me of?

Ben: Who?

Andy: My husband. He was a lot like you.

Ben: So this is what this is all about.

Andy: What?

Ben: Not content with ballsing up your relationship you have to smash mine. I've heard all about you.

Andy: Oh, I'm sure you have. I was a messy cow? I couldn't run a house?

Ben: I'm not getting into this

Andy: Another nice easy thing to believe. Andy, mucky, sloppy, mouthy cow,

Ben: Look.

Andy: Did he tell you I loved him? Did he tell you he was my Mr Right, my knight in shining armour? Did he tell you I tried to be who he wanted? Tried till it nearly bloody killed me? Probably not.

Ben: Look, I have to go

Andy: Here. **(she hands it to Ben who flicks through it)** It's all there. **(Ben doesn't answer)** Before you go.

Ben: What?

Andy: I did have a little flick through.

Ben: Oh?

Andy: It's a fascinating subject. The old G.M. It really makes you think.

Ben: I know.

Andy: Mind blowing. I mean there you have a plant, a lovely plant, lovely in every way but with one small flaw. Or what you perceive to be a flaw. It might fade too quickly. Or hate frost. Or die with too much herbicide. Or anything. So what d'you do? Get rid of the flaw. Insert a gene which will counteract that flaw. So the plant's still lovely, but now it's lovely in the way you want it to be.

Ben: I don't need a genetics lesson.

Andy: Bear with me a moment. You see to me this raises issues. Two points. One: what will happen to that plant? As you said, it's all very unpredictable. Even if the plant can withstand frost or weedkiller or fading, you don't know what else it will or will not do. You just can't be sure. And two, does the grower have the right to tamper with nature?

Ben: Can I have the file?

Andy: Of course. **(she hands him the file)** Oh, and you'll want these.

Ben: What?

Andy: Letters sent to a certain P.O Box number. I am writing about the flat advertised in last weeks Target blah, blah. I am writing to enquire about the room to let mentioned in the Aire Valley Target, etc. etc. So just say, instead of a plant you have a girlfriend. A lovely girl, sweet natured, devoted to you, hanging onto your

every word, lovely in every respect except for one thing. She's wavering about letting you move in with her. So, what to do? Simple, find her a flat mate. Not just any old flat mate but someone a bit brash, a bit of a sloppy cow, move her in and with a bit of luck within a few weeks your girlfriend'll be on her knees begging you to move in and rid her of this terrible, terrible girl. Only it's not worked out quite like that has it? **(Wordlessly Ben takes the letters and turns to go) Hang on. (She holds out the carrot mask)** Yours. I think you'll be needing it.

Ben: I love her.

Andy: And sometimes the end justifies the means, is that it? **(Ben doesn't reply)** You know, that's one of the reasons I have such problems with being in Greenpeace.

Ben: What?

Andy: The old direct action. Trashing crops. Burning equipment. Because the end justifies the means. Only I'm not sure that it ever does.

Ben: You're in Greenpeace.

Andy: Eight years now.

Ben: My God.

Andy: You'll find it hard to believe but I'm just as concerned about GM as you are.

Ben: You're right, I do.

Andy: There's a whole stack of things about it that scare me absolutely shitless.

Ben: So why give me all that grief.

Andy: Because of the way you do things.

Ben: You've got to get through to people.

Andy: By shouting them down? Scaring them?

Ben: You've got to get them to listen.

Andy: To the issues, or to you? **(she exits leaving him stood there. He throws the folder across the floor. Suddenly the lights come up, the set falls back: we are on a hilltop three years previously. A lovely, lovely day, bright sunshine, birdsong- a faint breeze. He stands taking in great lungfuls of air.)**

Jenny: **(offstage)** Wait for me.

Ben: Come on, you're nearly there, just the last bit to do. **(Jenny staggers on)**

Jenny: Whew.

Ben: Just look at that view.

Jenny: **(out of breath)** Yes.

Ben: I never get tired of it.

Jenny: Let me get my breath back.

Ben: Here sit down.

Jenny: It's my feet.

Ben: **(solicitous)** Let's have a look.

Jenny: They're killing me.

Ben: We'll have to get you some proper boots when you move up here.

Jenny: Yes.

Ben: I'll help you, we'll go to the walking shop in Settle.

Jenny: It is lovely up here. **(they kiss and sit for a moment, him behind her, arms round her front)** You can see for miles.

Ben: That's Penyghent and over there, that's Whernside.

Jenny: Miles and miles and miles.

Ben: That one with the flat top, that's Ingleborough.

Jenny: And all those fields, yellow and green and brown, it's like a patchwork.

Ben: Thanks to us.

Jenny: Sorry?

Ben: The 'Save our Hedgerow' campaign.

Jenny: Right.

Ben: I'll never forget that march through Leeds. **(he smiles at the memory)** We had the traffic backed up for hours.

Jenny: My Mr Radical.

Ben: It's the only way to be.

Jenny: I was reading about some other farming controversy.

Ben: Oh?

Jenny: Something called GM.

Ben: Is that something to do with the government?

Jenny: No- it's genetic something, something to do with making crops better.

Ben: They're always doing something.

Jenny: It's meant to make crops last longer and need less herbicide.

Ben: Sounds like a good idea.

Jenny: Do you ever find it difficult.

Ben: What?

Jenny: Your job. I mean with all the issues you deal with.

Ben: Yes?

Jenny: Do you ever get an issue you're not that bothered about?

Ben: No.

Jenny: Oh?

Ben: I can't. The whole job's about issues, and caring about them. With every issue you have to remember two things. One. Nothing's black and white. Every issue has pros and cons, what you have to do is weigh them up against each other.

Jenny: And two?

Ben: And two. Forget all that. It's black. No white exists. Forget the white. All pros or all cons. That's what you carry with you.

Jenny: Isn't that.

Ben: What?

Jenny: A bit extreme?

Ben: It's how you have to be.

Jenny: Surely not.

Ben: I remember, when I was a kid there was this tree, near school. A lovely old tree, really old, I mean it probably had God knows what tree diseases, but it went back years. Cromwell someone said, I mean think about it, a tree that Oliver Cromwell might actually have seen. Anyway, the council decided they wanted to cut it down. Make way for a car park. So my Dad organised a protest. Save Our Tree.

Jenny: Good for him.

Ben: And it was a very genteel affair. A petition went round and we had a coffee morning, my Father made a few polite speeches.

Jenny: And?

Ben: We were trounced. The council absolutely shat on us. Made out the tree was a health hazard, a threat to children, that the car park was the only thing that would stop the town centre from being one big traffic jam, all total bollocks. All cons. But it did the job. It won. And Dad was made out to be a well meaning crackpot. I'll never forget the look on his face. And all along he was right. The tree shouldn't have gone. So I learnt from that you get nowhere with polite speeches and coffee mornings.

Jenny: So, no black or white answers.

Ben: And then black or white. **(they kiss)** Anyway, come on we'd better be getting back.

Jenny: Ben, this girl.

Ben: I've said. It's all over.

Jenny: You're sure.

Ben: We're sharing a house nothing more.

Jenny: That's it?

Ben: That's it. You do love me?

Jenny: It's not that.

Ben: Yes or no?

Jenny: Yes.

Ben: It'll be great when you move up here. And in time we can get somewhere together.

Jenny: Yes

Ben: We can come up here again and again and again. **(he holds her as the light fades and 'Sweet As You Are' swells up)**

The Curtain Falls

