

# RETINAS.

by Luke Stapleton

## **Characters**

GARTH, *30s*

ROSIE, *14*

## Scene One

*A table and two chairs.*

*GARTH and ROSIE sit facing each other. GARTH consults notes on a clipboard, ROSIE leans forward, full of nervous energy. She voraciously unwraps and demolishes a pack of Starburst sweets.*

**ROSIE** So I'm pushing Tom down the pavement by mine, just walking, pushing, minding my own business, like you said I should –

**GARTH** Good / good –

**ROSIE** when out of nowhere this twat, right,

**GARTH** mm –

**ROSIE** big dock-off fella called Terrence, face like a dog's dinner, proper wide arse on him, belly hanging out, scatty beard eating a monster Maccy's, sauce dripping down his vest, yeah? Fat dickhead, yeah?

**GARTH** Yep, I got that, yeah.

**ROSIE** Walks right into us, doesn't he? Deliberately like, steps out from his yard and blocks us off and 'cos he's so fat I can't walk round him without going on the road and I can't do that with Tom can I, so I'm like 'hello-o-o, can't you see I'm *walking* here?' and he just grins at me with this sick, twisted grin, dirty pieces of horsemeat sticking out his teeth and I'm like – I'm fuming, had to proper recalibrate myself and everything...

**GARTH** Well it's good that you remembered to / recalibrate –

**ROSIE** but he still wouldn't move so I screams to him 'YOU DON'T OWN THE PAVEMENT...'

**GARTH** OK well you were angry –

**ROSIE** 'WHY DON'T YOU GET A JOB AND EAT A FUCKING APPLE FOR ONCE?'

**GARTH** Perhaps / that was –

**ROSIE** 'YOU FAT PAEDO FUCK!'

*GARTH groans.*

(offers the Starburst) D'you want one?

**GARTH** No – thanks... see – see this is the problem Rosie, you do everything right, exactly how I ask... up until a point... and then it's like something just switches –

**ROSIE** Well he needed to be told.

**GARTH** That he was a paedophile?

**ROSIE** A fat paedo fuck, yeah. He wouldn't get out my way!

**GARTH** How did you know his name?

**ROSIE** What?

**GARTH** You said his name was Terrence –

**ROSIE** Fat Terrence, yeah –

**GARTH** Fat Terrence?

**ROSIE** Yeah.

**GARTH** Why do you – why would you call him that?

**ROSIE** ... 'Cos he's fat and he's called Terrence.

**GARTH** Do you know him? Personally?

**ROSIE** Know of him. He lives by me, I know everyone what lives by me, so's what?

**GARTH** I'm just... trying to understand your mindset, / is all.

**ROSIE** My mindset was, I'm having a nice little walk here, give Tom some fresh air, think about waves and seagulls and stuff, just like you said, then I get this big hairy doofus stand in our way just, grinning at us, ruining all my good vibes –

**GARTH** You didn't think that maybe it was an accident? On – on Terrence's part... Maybe he / accidentally –

**ROSIE** Oh pull the other one Doc, he knew what he was doing. He's a sly frog is what he is. He's always grinning at us. Laughing. Him and his shithouse mates, they're all fat stupid meffs.

*Beat.*

*GARTH recalibrates.*

**GARTH** You understand why I'm here, don't you Rosie?

**ROSIE** Course.

**GARTH** It... it's essential... that we find a way – together – to fix this... behaviour. I need to see signs of improvement, I'm sorry, but I do. Otherwise –

*Beat.*

**ROSIE** Otherwise what?

*Double beat.*

**GARTH** How is Tom?

**ROSIE** He's Tom.

*Beat.*

**GARTH** And the fits?

**ROSIE** (*shrugs*) Hasn't had one for a couple of weeks.

**GARTH** Good, that / that's good –

**ROSIE** It's not. It's shit.

**GARTH** It's shit that he hasn't had a fit?

**ROSIE** Yeah. 'Cos it's waiting, innit. Always waiting for it to happen. Least if he had one yesterday I could relax a bit, knowing I had another week to chill. It's been nearly three weeks now, I'm on a knife's edge all the friggin' time...

**GARTH** I can understand how that / might –

**ROSIE** And the thing with fits is you can't hear them half the time, least if he's got wind or he's hungry or in pain or something he can cry. Can hear that from down my Auntie Cath's. When he fits he's near silent, just...

*She convulses – low, rapid intakes of breath, mimicking a seizure.*

How the hell am I supposed to hear that?

**GARTH** Do you not use the baby monitor?

**ROSIE** Nah. Jibbed it.

**GARTH** Why?

**ROSIE** (mouth full) 'Cos for it to work you have to turn up to like, 11 yeah? If a fly buzzes past it sounds like a fucking Spitfire's dropping bombs on the house, risks setting off my Gran's PTSD –

**GARTH** So what do you do?

**ROSIE** What d'you mean what do I do?

**GARTH** Without the baby monitor on, h-h-how do you hear him?

**ROSIE** Just have to listen, don't I? Watch Ant & Dec on mute. Do everything in five minute bursts. Shower, check Tom, put oven on, check Tom, peel 'tato's, check Tom, chop 'tato's, check Tom, wait for 'tato's to cook, oh I know, I'll just check Tom – hey how d'you eat your 'tato's?

*Beat.*

**GARTH** I – I'm sorry?

**ROSIE** 'Tato's, (*posh*) *potatoes* – how d'you cook 'em? Eat 'em?

**GARTH** I don't, / I think we should stay on –

**ROSIE** You don't cook 'tato's?

**GARTH** No I do, of course but I just think we / should –

**ROSIE** How then? 's all I'm asking... Come on, you sit there and ask me questions all day about things I don't wanna talk about but I do, least you can do is tell me how you cook your 'tato's...

*Beat.*

**GARTH** I like... gnocchi, actually.

**ROSIE** ... you what?

**GARTH** It's like... like potato pasta.

**ROSIE** the fuck?

**GARTH** Anyway, you / were saying –

**ROSIE** I'm stuck on wedges. Every bleedin' day, wedges. I've got them down like, I make them right good – crispy and fluffy in the middle but I'm fucking sick of them. Need some inspiration, man. Bad style... Can you make this Nocky then?

**GARTH** Erm – I just... buy it from the shop.

**ROSIE** Where'd you shop?

**GARTH** Erm –

**ROSIE** I reckon you can tell everything you need to know about someone from where they shop. Me, right – I'm an ASDA girl. Will be forever, it's just in me blood. Was in me Mum's when we was growing up and it'll be in mine 'til I die. Or until it goes bust, whichever's first. Feels inevitable really, what with all these German knock-offs springing up everywhere, they're like locusts aren't they? Don't you think? Go on, where'd you shop?

**GARTH** I er – well I'll do the big shop in Tesco –

**ROSIE** Knew it –

**GARTH** And the – the essential bits from... from Aldi.

*ROSIE shakes her head.*

**ROSIE** Fucking knew it. You know that makes us enemies, right? Nah just kidding, but seriously though, walk round here with a Tesco bag for life, that's enough to get you shot mate... Fucked up...

*Pause.*

*ROSIE stops eating the Starbust, for the first time.*

I am getting better Doc, I swears... I barely shouts at no-one these days, it's just – people like fat Terrence, they fucking...

*Beat.*

it's the staring that does it. They don't prepare you for that. It ain't 'cos he's fat or – or called Terrence, I actually quite like that name, just not on him. He's more of a...

*Beat.*

*She sighs.*

I try to ignore it, like you said, I try. And I think of Wales and seagulls and sticks of rock and all of that and it helps sometimes but – but when they stare... that just fucking... sets me off. And I want to – cut them up or... break their head, you know? Disfigure them. Stare at them back and be like 'how do you like that, huh? How'd you like that Terrence you fat, stupid, / fucking...

**GARTH** don't say it –

**ROSIE** cunt.

*Beat.*

*GARTH sighs.*

**GARTH** You do know... that it was Terrence who... who called the –

*ROSIE nods.*

*GARTH rubs his face.*

I'm going to be straight with you, Rosie, because – because I want what's best for you. I want you to learn from this meeting because if you don't... then I can't help you. You'll be taken away from here. From your Gran, from school, from – from Tom... I don't want that Rosie. You don't want that and Tom certainly doesn't. He needs his sister. Here. And you're not going to be able to do much good when you're inside a Young Offender's, are you? ... Hm?

**ROSIE** No.

**GARTH** No... So please Rosie, I *need to see* some improvement. I could – I might be able to – to forget the C-U-N-T-calling if you could promise me –

**ROSIE** Just say cunt, it's fine.

**GARTH** Rosie, if I could see –

**ROSIE** What, it's only a fanny? All the old people used to say it and it was fine.

**GARTH** Rosie! ... If I could see... that you showed just a little bit of remorse. And maybe... maybe a promise that it would never happen again... and by that I mean a written, signed, last chance promise... What do you say? ... Rosie? ... For Tom? ...

*Beat.*

**ROSIE** Do they sell Nocky in ASDA then?

*GARTH leans back. Exasperated.*

'Cos fuck going in Tesco, I'm not risking that...

*Beat.*

*GARTH goes to write.*

*But can't bring himself to.*

*Beat.*

**GARTH** All I'm trying to do is help you, Rosie.

**ROSIE** No you're not –

**GARTH** Of course / I am –

**ROSIE** no you're not, you're here 'cos fat Terrence called the pigs who called your bald boss who called you and probably went 'sort it out will yer, she's caused us enough grief as it is', and here you are... trying to sort it out... You don't *want* to help me. Nobody wants to help me. And I'm not crying over it, I'm not upset, it's the truth. And the way I see it there's no point in getting upset about what you haven't got 'cos you'll just spend your whole life crying.

*Beat.*

**GARTH** But we *can* help you / Rosie –

**ROSIE** So why haven't you then? Why haven't you?

**GARTH** Because to help you, you're going to have to cooperate –

**ROSIE** Fuck off!

**GARTH** And see – that sort of language and – and antisocial behaviour is not cooperative.

**ROSIE** What are you on about, cooperative? Are you stuck on supermarkets still?

**GARTH** Rosie, listen / to me –

**ROSIE** You're trying to say that I don't cooperate, yeah, when I spend every 5 minutes of my life checking my retard brother ain't electric shocking himself to death, changing his nappies, feedin' him milk, liftin' him up and down off that bed twenty times a die, bathe him, dress him, play music for him, sing for him, not go out for him, not have friends for him, not watch TV for him, and you're saying I need to cooperate?

**GARTH** / I don't doubt for a minute that you work extremely – extremely hard to look after your brother –

**ROSIE** And on top of that all the helping Gran every time she gets up, cooking, cleaning, eating fucking wedges every day, all for what?! ... To have him stare at me and fucking ... fucking smirk at Tom every time we walks past ... shouting out, 'how's the rem?' when his little gimpies mates are round, chewing their shoulder when I walks past, giving it the whole (pretends to be retarded)

'my name's Tom, urrrr'. Well no!... Fuck them!... And fuck you, saying I don't cooperate. Fuck all of you. In the ass. With a spoon.

*Beat.*

*GARTH writes.*

What you writing?

**GARTH** Have you reported him? For bullying?

**ROSIE** I'm not a fucking grass.

**GARTH** It's not grassing if –

**ROSIE** Look Doc just – save your breath, yeah? You don't understand how it is down here. We deal with shit. Ourselves. Yeah? My Dad always said he'd rather be dead or in jail than a grass.

**GARTH** Well – that is terrible advice –

**ROSIE** It's the way it is.

**GARTH** I mean – technically he did grass on you, that's why I'm here / so it wouldn't be –

**ROSIE** Think I give a hoot about fat Terrence? He can think what he wants, they all can – but I'm not grassing... That's not what we do...

*Beat.*

*ROSIE eats her Starburst.*

*GARTH writes.*

What happens to him if I get taken away?

**GARTH** Social Services will get him... But we really don't want it to come to that. Honestly we don't...

*Beat.*

What if...

*Beat.*

What if you weren't quite so... you know... *vocal*... with regards to Terrence?

**ROSIE** ...huh?

**GARTH** What I mean to say is, what if your... response, shall we say... wasn't quite so public?

**ROSIE** Speak English Doc –

**GARTH** Come on I'm not – not going to tell you how you can – what I'm trying to say is maybe there are... other ways of getting your... revenge... that wouldn't land you in quite so much hot water?



*Beat.*

**ROSIE** Doc, you old goat. You old – you old... I could have you fired for that.

*Beat.*

**GARTH** Please don't.

**ROSIE** Well... we'll have to see what you write down on that there form then, won't we?

**GARTH** No I mean – please... don't.

**ROSIE** I'm just fucking with you Doc, I told you I'm no grass.

**GARTH** I just mean... something that might not leave quite the same trail, if you – if you know / what I mean –

**ROSIE** I know Doc, I know, you're on about some ninja shit, aren't you? Egg his windows, shit through the letterbox, that sort of thing –

**GARTH** Preferably no bodily fluids / as –

**ROSIE** Slip his dog a laxative, spray paint paedo on his door –

**GARTH** That's probably not a – a great idea either, considering / I mean more –

**ROSIE** More what?

**GARTH** More... subtle.

*Beat.*

**ROSIE** Stab him?

*Beat.*

Is that what you mean Doc? You saying I should stab him?

**GARTH** Abso – absolutely not –

**ROSIE** I've thought about it – honestly I have – lots of times –

**GARTH** Stabbing is not – not subtle –

**ROSIE** Lots and lots and lots –

**GARTH** and very dangerous – extremely dangerous –

**ROSIE** Where would I stab him though? His belly's huge and I don't even know if I can reach his neck –

**GARTH** Rosie, I – I didn't mean –

**ROSIE** I could slice his Achilles, so he falls down on his knees, then climb on his back and slit his throat –

**GARTH** Rosie, stop – I – I didn't mean –

**ROSIE** Yeah... I think that's what I'll do –

**GARTH** Rosie!

**ROSIE** What?

*Beat.*

*GARTH panics.*

*ROSIE grins.*

I'm just kidding Doc. Jeez. Just having a little josh with you. I'm not gonna stab fat Terrence. He's not worth it... But I hear you though, on the subtle revenge business... I hear that, alright...

**GARTH** I didn't mean anything too –

**ROSIE** Ostentatious, right?

**GARTH** Erm. Yeah... I suppose...

**ROSIE** See Doc, I'm sharp me... sharp and subtle... I knows what I'm doing...

**GARTH** OK.

**ROSIE** I hear you Doc... I'll be cooperative... I'll improve... I feel like I'm improving already...

*Beat.*

**GARTH** OK.

**ROSIE** Do you think I'm improving?

*Beat.*

Doc?

*Beat.*

*GARTH takes a deep breath. Unsure what to do with himself.*

**GARTH** I think...

*ROSIE stops chewing.*

**ROSIE** I'm not leaving him Doc... you know that, don't you?

*Beat.*

*GARTH nods.*

*ROSIE chews.*

Good... oh... it's my last one... do you want it?

*Beat.*

*GARTH slowly nods.*

*ROSIE hands it to him.*

*GARTH takes it.*

**GARTH** Thanks.

**ROSIE** Welcome.

*GARTH stares at it.*

Well... aren't you going to eat it?

*GARTH looks at her, then back to the chew.*

*He unwraps it.*

*He eats it.*

*ROSIE smiles. Nods.*

**GARTH** Mmm.

**ROSIE** Good?

**GARTH** Mm, hmm... Mm...

*Beat.*

*GARTH swallows it.*

*Beat.*

*They stare at one another.*

*An understanding.*

*GARTH begins to write.*

*Lights fade to black.*