

Unhelpful

A 10-minute Play

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CHARACTERS

MARIE - 40s, selfish and scunnered

FIONA - 30s, disabled and drunk

WOMAN (O.S.) - Voice who finally answers the call.

SCENE 1

A street at night with the noise of traffic occasionally tricking by. The stage is our pavement and beyond, lies our invisible road.

MARIE waits by a SIGN labelled TAXI RANK, frustrated at her phone.

While a drunk FIONA stumbles stage right. She's wobbly, uncoordinated and swerves face-first into the SIGN.

Marie starts at the impact as Fiona hisses and covers her face:

FIONA
Fuck me!

Fiona staggers back. Towards the sound of an incoming car on the road (off stage).

Marie rushes forward and grabs Fiona before she spills over. A car horn bleeps angrily off-stage while lights shine on Marie and Fiona. A near-miss.

MARIE
Jesus!

FIONA
No for me, thanks.

Marie, aware that Fiona is held against her chest, nudges her away.

MARIE
(sniffs)
Ugh! You pure reek of booze.

Fiona stumbles on her own. Fishes out a hanky and places it against her head.

Marie notices that Fiona has a visible disability. Note: this can be adapted to casting availability and preference.

MARIE
Oh! You're [disabled]--

FIONA
--I'm what?

MARIE

Hurt. You must be hurt ... are you hurt?

Awkward. Gestures vaguely to Fiona's hanky-covered head.

FIONA

Had worse. Where am I?

MARIE

Didn't you read the sign before you headbutted it? Taxi rank.

FIONA

I need a taxi. Please. Tah.

MARIE

I don't--I'm waiting too. There's none yet.

FIONA

Fuck it. I'll make my own way.

She eyes Marie with a squint, obviously inebriated.

FIONA

Some help *you* are.

MARIE

I don't work here! I'm waiting too!

As Fiona stumbles off, Marie deliberates. Fiona's in no shape to be left alone.

MARIE

But I could help. Annoyingly.

An inconvenienced Marie goes after Fiona and halts her.

MARIE

No. You're not going anywhere like this.

She guides Fiona back to the rank, props her up against the sign.

FIONA

How? Cause I'm disabled you think I need a carer?

MARIE

No - cause you're very, very drunk.

FIONA

We cripples can do that too!

MARIE

Of course. Look, I've also ordered a cab on the app – see what gets here quicker.

FIONA

Fuck off Florence Nightingale. All I need is another drink.

MARIE

Wait till you're home. Which is?

FIONA

27.

MARIE

27?

FIONA

Aye. 27.

MARIE

Road? Street? Avenue? Under a bridge?

Fiona points towards the audience - in a vague direction.

MARIE

Postcode? G?

Fiona nods.

MARIE

Next letter?

FIONA

What's this? Countdown.

MARIE

Look, help me to help you. Where do you live?

Fiona slumps into the sign, sleepy.

FIONA

West.

MARIE

No, no, no. Stay awake. What's your name?

FIONA

Fiona.

MARIE

Ok, *Fiona* - of all the bloody names today! West where? End?

Fiona slumps forward into Marie, who staggers back and guides her to sit on the ground.

MARIE

Fuck it, a dirty arse is the least of your worries.

She props an out-cold Fiona up against the sign while Marie's phone PINGS.

MARIE

A driver! 15 mins away.

(nudges Fiona)

C'mon. We can get your address and work it out from there. Maybe even half in.

No answer from a sleeping Fiona. Marie searches the pockets of Fiona's jacket.

MARIE

Fine, there's always other means. You should--

Pulls out some small items.

MARIE

--Not have ID or a phone. Great.

Marie looks at the tat in her hands.

MARIE

But we have a locket, gloves and a ticket stub with--

Marie gags. Holds the offending item away in disgust--

MARIE

There's *blood* on the ticket stub! Should've put the gloves on first. Christ!

Fiona snores. Marie disgustedly shoves the gloves back in a pocket. Gasps as she spots--

MARIE

Your hand!

She leans in closer.

MARIE

A number. Written on your hand. Someone you had to call. Someone helpful!

Marie stands up as she dials. We hear the RINGING but it hits a BUSY TONE. Marie looks to the locket next, still in hand, and opens it.

MARIE

Two boys' pictures.

(disbelieving)

You're a mum? Wow, okay.

She reads the bloody ticket stub next, suppresses a gag.

MARIE

It's for a play. A play? You got this rat arsed and spilled blood at a play? !

Marie types into her phone furiously.

MARIE

Okay, Google. Where was *A Deadly Encounter* shown? An Arts Centre in ... Bearsden! That's where the other Fiona lives, the cunt.

FIONA

(stirring)

Who you callin' a cunt?!

MARIE

Look, I got made redundant today because I'm too unhelpful by my boss, also named Fiona. Something in the name! |Cheek to say *I'm* self absorbed.

FIONA

M'head hurts.

MARIE

Of course it does, eejit! Now I'm helping your unhelpful arse home when you're likely one of her neighbours. Your boys even probably go to the same school as her brats.

Marie crouches and grabs Fiona's jacket lapels.

MARIE

JUST TELL ME WHERE YOU LIVE WOMAN!

Fiona groans, pathetically. Marie frustratedly redials the number.

MARIE

Fine. See if you're husband/wife/babysitter/carer/probation officer can help--

The call connects.

WOMAN (O.S.)

Hello?

MARIE

Hello! Hi. Thank *god*. I'm with Fiona and she's pished.

WOMAN (O.S)

Can I ask who I'm speaking to?

Marie turns her back on Fiona and walks a few steps away as she talks.

MARIE

I'm Marie. Fiona is currently *very* drunk. I'm a kind bystander, helping her home.

Fiona awakes. Her eyes sharp and alert. She gets up carefully, dropping the hanky to reveal no injury at all. She's not even drunk as she quickly pulls on the gloves.

WOMAN (O.S.)

I'm a nurse at the Hospital. This phone belonged to a patient admitted - Fiona Sullivan.

Fiona smoothly creeps towards an unaware Marie.

MARIE

Fiona Sullivan? That's my - was my boss.

WOMAN (O.S.)

I am so sorry for your loss, madam. We're trying to locate her next of kin urgently--

MARIE

What? Fiona's not dead--she just fired me a couple of hours ago!

Fiona coughs. Marie swivels in a fright and comes face to face with Fiona who removes something from her pocket.

MARIE

Well, look who's up--

Fiona stabs Marie in the neck with a needle. As Marie starts, dropping the phone, Fiona holds her firm - a reversal of their first contact. Her movements precise and well-practiced.

FIONA

There, there. Have to say seeing you storm out that reception was a very welcome turnaround for the books! I been following you sulking about town. Not that you noticed lil' crippled me, of course.

Marie begins to react to whatever's in her system, begins to fall.

WOMAN (O.S.)

Hello, Madam? The police must speak to you urgently!

Marie falls to the pavement, gasping. Fiona watches on.

Desperate, Marie speaks towards the phone with her final breaths--

MARIE

No! I was...trying to... *help!*

Fiona nudges the phone away with her foot.

FIONA

And you did, help me.

Marie dies with a final rattling breath.

Fiona carefully puts the locket and ticket stub back in Marie's pockets.

Standing tall, Fiona strolls off stage right. Leaving Marie to her fate.

Off-stage, the sound of a car pulls up with a BEEP of a horn. Lights shine on the TAXI RANK sign and then on Marie's lifeless body. Finally, her taxi.

Lights dim.

SCENE 2

Lights up. A new street. A lack of signs.

Fiona enters stage left. Calculated, calm and oozing danger as she makes a call.

FIONA

It's all done. Target was in the office working late. All alone, like you said.

(listens)

Poor sod had sacked an am-dram play she was meant to be in tonight. I've even found you the perfect fall woman. Some arsehole the target fired earlier so motive. Did a bit of improvising to secure the opportunity and some evidence. Left her shouting at poor sods in a coffee shop while I dealt with the target. Then caught the bitch waiting, alone, at the taxi rank. Even pretended to be a Fiona.

(listens, big smile)

Yeah, I know I'm brilliant! That's why you come to me. Same account details as always and feel free to throw in a tip. No, thank *you*. Happy to be of help.

Fiona hangs up and laughs to herself - amused at the turn of events.

Stage lights dim.

THE END