EXTRACT

12

a play

by

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Characters

CULLUM - A practicing alcoholic, drinking himself into oblivion. 30-40s.

MICHELLE - Cullum's wife and mother of their young child, 30s

CLARENCE - A nurse at a Psychiatric Hospital, 30s. Gay.

TONY - Cullum's Alcoholics Anonymous sponsor, 50s-60s

LEO - A former boxer and recovering alcoholic, 30s-40s

SUZY - A recovering alcoholic, upbeat and funny, 20-30s

CHARNE - A work colleague of Cullum's, struggling with a hidden drinking problem, 20-30s

(PLEASE NOTE: Suzy and Charne can be played by the same actor.)

Time

The present

Setting

Various locations around a large city

Synopsis

Cullum has lost everything – his job, his friends, his family, even his sanity. And now he finds himself lying on the floor of a no-star hotel sucking cheap vodka out of the disease ridden carpet. Over him stands his long-suffering wife Michelle, who can bear to watch no more. But the journey to a new beginning has to start somewhere and maybe, finally, Cullum has had enough. But he has no idea of the even tougher road that lies ahead.

1.

Darkness. We hear the sound of someone urinating on carpet.

The lights come up very slowly.

We make out a figure in the corner. They are urinating on the floor.

The lights come up a little more and we make out another figure, sitting across the room in a chair.

The lights come up a little more and we find we are in a dingy motel room.

On the bedside table sit three large bottles of cheap Vodka.

The man finishes pissing. He turns slowly. He is paralytic, so drunk it's surprising he can stand. He is wearing only filthy boxer shorts. His name is **CULLUM**.

CULLUM sways gently, trying to focus on the bottles on the bedside table.

He begins to move towards the bottles – one step, two steps. He sways again and loses his balance. He slowly crumples to his knees then slumps back against the wall.

He is now sitting on the carpet where he just urinated. His head slowly sinks on to his chest.

The figure in the other chair speaks. It is a woman's voice.

MICHELLE: How old do you think that carpet is? (BEAT) Five years, ten years, twenty. (BEAT) Imagine all the crap that's been ground into it over those years. (BEAT) Cigarette butts, chewing gum, dog shit, human shit, piss - your piss – cum, sweat, saliva, vomit, bits of dead skin, toe nails, hair, pubic hair, beer, sour milk, blood, menstrual blood, animal blood, disease. Something died in this room, on this carpet. It's still here. (BEAT.) But the thing is none of that matters. The piss, the semen, the shit – the carpet that smells like death. It won't stop you. Nothing will stop you.

MICHELLE STANDS. SHE GOES TO THE TABLE. SHE OPENS ONE OF THE BOTTLES OF VODKA. SHE SNIFFS, RECOILS.

MICHELLE: Classy.

SHE WALKS OVER TO WHERE **CULLUM** PISSED ON THE CARPET.

SHE SLOWLY POURS THE BOTTLE OF VODKA ON TO THE CARPET. THE SOUND OF THE VODKA HITTING THE FLOOR.

MICHELLE EMPTIES THE BOTTLE. SHE GOES BACK TO THE TABLE. SHE PICKS UP A SECOND.

SHE WALKS BACK OVER TO WHERE SHE EMPTIED THE FIRST BOTTLE. SHE BEGINS TO POUR THE SECOND BOTTLE ON TO THE CARPET.

CULLUM RAISES HIS HEAD SLOWLY. HE WATCHES THE VODKA POURING ON TO THE CARPET.

A SOUND COMES FROM **CULLUM**. IT'S A HALF BELLOW – HALF GROAN. THE SOUND OF WORDS BUT WITH NO TONGUE OR LIPS FORMING THEM INTO LANGUAGE.

MICHELLE FINISHES POURING THE SECOND BOTTLE. SHE GOES BACK TO THE TABLE. SHE PICKS UP THE THIRD.

THE BELLOW-MOAN GETS LOUDER. **CULLUM** SLAMS THE WALL WITH AN OPEN HAND.

MICHELLE WALKS BACK OVER TO WHERE SHE EMPTIED THE OTHER BOTTLES. SHE BEGINS TO POUR THE LAST BOTTLE OUT.

CULLUM BEGINS TO DRAG HIMSELF ALONG THE CARPET TOWARDS **MICHELLE**. HE REACHES OUT AND GRABS HER LEG, PULLING HER TO THE GROUND.

HE CLAMBERS OVER HER, TRYING TO GET THE BOTTLE.

MICHELLE STRUGGLES, KEEPING THE BOTTLE OUT OF REACH.

CULLUM GRABS HER AROUND THE THROAT, PUSHING HER FACE INTO THE CARPET.

MICHELLE BEGINS TO GASP, STRUGGLING FOR AIR, SHE PUSHES BACK AT **CULLUM**.

CULLUM NOW USES BOTH HANDS TO STRANGLE HER.

MICHELLE HITS HIM ON THE BACK WITH THE BOTTLE. IT HAS NO EFFECT. **MICHELLE** HITS HIM AGAIN, HARDER.

CULLUM SEES THE BOTTLE. HE RELEASES **MICHELLE** AND GRABS THE BOTTLE. HE DRAINS WHAT REMAINS.

MICHELLE LIES ON THE FLOOR, GASPING FOR BREATH.

CULLUM SMELLS THE CARPET NEXT TO HIM. BEAT. HE LICKS THE CARPET.

CULLUM PRESSES HIS MOUTH TO THE CARPET AND BEGINS TO SUCK THE VODKA OUT OF THE CARPET.

MICHELLE DRAGS HERSELF SLOWLY TO HER FEET, WATCHING **CULLUM**.

SHE PICKS UP THE EMPTY VODKA BOTTLE. SHE EXITS. THERE IS THE SOUND OF SMASHING GLASS.

MICHELLE RETURNS WITH A SLIVER OF MIRROR. HER HAND DRIPS WITH BLOOD.

CULLUM IS STILL SUCKING THE VODKA OUT OF THE CARPET.

MICHELLE JERKS **CULLUM'S** HEAD UP BY HIS HAIR. SHE SHOVES THE MIRROR IN FRONT OF HIS FACE.

MICHELLE: Look.

CULLUM TRIES TO YANK HIS HEAD AWAY. **MICHELLE** HOLDS IT.

MICHELLE: Look! This is who you are! This is our life.

MICHELLE RELEASES **CULLUM**. HIS HEAD DROPS TO THE FLOOR. BEAT. **CULLUM** BEGINS TO SUCK THE CARPET AGAIN.

MICHELLE RAISES THE SLIVER OF MIRROR. FOR A MOMENT IT SEEMS SHE WILL STAB HIM. BEAT. SHE DROPS THE MIRROR ON TO THE CARPET.

CULLUM DROPS HIS HEAD TO THE CARPET. WE HEAR A SOUND. IT IS **CULLUM** CRYING, LOUD DESPERATE SOBS.

MICHELLE'S HAND SLOWLY REACHES OUT FOR **CULLUM'S** HEAD. BUT SHE STOPS AN INCH SHORT. BEAT.

CULLUM STOPS CRYING. BEAT. HE RAISES HIS HEAD AND BEGINS TO SUCK THE VODKA FROM THE CARPET AGAIN.

MICHELLE STANDS. SHE LOOKS AT **CULLUM**. SHE SLOWLY TURNS AND EXITS, SHUTTING THE DOOR BEHIND HER.

CULLUM ALONE. HE CONTINES TO SUCK THE VODKA FROM THE CARPET, SOBBING AS HE DOES. THE LIGHTS FADE.

(PLEASE NOTE: The dialogue in this scene is optional and may be used or not used as per the director and actors discretion. For example, it might be possible to do the scene with no dialogue at all. Or start with Michelle's line: "Look!" as the first line of dialogue.)

2.

Psych Ward.

Lights SNAP UP BRIGHT on **CULLUM** - strapped to a bed with thick leather straps. He is unconscious.

Next to the bed is a small metal cabinet. On the cabinet a plastic jug of water and some plastic cups.

CULLUM wakes. He does not know where he is. He slowly realises he is strapped to the bed. He begins to struggle. The straps hold him tight.

CLARENCE, a male nurse, enters.

CLARENCE: See – you're not dead? The ladies at the nurses' station were positive you'd carked it. But I had faith. And here you are – wriggle wriggle wriggle.

CULLUM CONTINUES TO STRUGGLE.

CLARENCE: Easy. These are nice thick straps. For your safety. And mine. You're not going anywhere – I hope.

CULLUM SUDDENLY REALISES HOW THIRSTY HE IS. HE LICKS HIS LIPS, OPENING AND CLOSING HIS MOUTH.

CLARENCE: (PICKING UP JUG) And that's what this is for. It's the drugs. When they start to wear off, mighty thirsty. Just like any Friday night really.

CLARENCE PUTS ON SOME RUBBER GLOVES.

CLARENCE: Rule number one. Apologies, but I don't know what kind of exotic diseases you may have. Or I have for that matter.

HE POURS A CUP OF WATER AND HOLDS IT UNDER **CULLUM'S** MOUTH.

CLARENCE: And no bitey-bitey. Understand? (BEAT) Nod your head if you understand.

CULLUM NODS HIS HEAD.

CLARENCE: Good boy.

CLARENCE POURS THE WATER SLOWLY INTO **CULLUM'S** MOUTH.

CULLUM SLURPS DOWN THE WATER. HE TRIES TO SPEAK.

CULLUM: M … m-m…

CLARENCE: The word you are looking for is “more”. One of my faves.

CLARENCE POURS ANOTHER CUP OF WATER. HE SLOWLY POURS IT INTO **CULLUM’S** MOUTH. **CULLUM** SLURPS IT DOWN.

CLARENCE: That’s enough. Second rule - more than two you start chucking it up.

CULLUM LOOKS AROUND, TRIES TO SPEAK.

CLARENCE: That one starts with “N”. As in Nut house.

BEAT. **CULLUM** BEGINS TO JERK AROUND.

CLARENCE: That’s the usual reaction.

CULLUM: Na … na …

CLARENCE: Ya ya. (GESTURING) Nut house. (POINTING TO **CULLUM**) Nut job. They come in many different varieties. Pecan nut, walnut, (POINTING AT **CULLUM**) peanut. Smells like a nut, tastes like a nut. Guess what? It’s a nut.

BEAT. **CULLUM** BEGINS TO JERK AROUND WILDLY NOW, RATTLING THE BED.

CLARENCE: My my. We are feisty.

CLARENCE GOES TO A SMALL POUCH. HE PULLS OUT A LARGE NEEDLE AND SHOWS IT TO **CULLUM**.

CLARENCE: That got your attention. Rule number three. Chill - or you get this – where it hurts.

CULLUM BECOMES STILL.

CLARENCE: Good. And you’re moving up the nut chain now. No longer a peanut. Now you’re a walnut. Soon you’ll be a Pecan and then Scorched Almond. When you’re a Scorched Almond I can take these off *(the straps).*

CULLUM HOLDS UP HIS HAND.

CLARENCE: What you want me to do with that?

CULLUM OPENS AND CLOSES HIS HAND.

CLARENCE: We’re waving. How nice. (WAVING) Love you too.

CULLUM OPENS AND CLOSES HIS HAND AGAIN.

CLARENCE: You want me to hold your hand?

CULLUM LOOKS AT **CLARENCE**.

CLARENCE: That's kind of cute, I guess. (BEAT) Just a little one. But you must promise not to tell.

CLARENCE TAKES **CULLUM'S** HAND.

CLARENCE: That's not too bad. Little bit touchy feely but …

CULLUM BEGINS TO GRIP **CLARENCE'S** HAND TIGHTER.

CLARENCE: Pretty good grip you got there Mr Grippy. Nice and tight. (BEAT) Little bit too tight. Can we … (TRYING TO GET HAND FREE) Release the hand. Release the hand or Mr Grippy gets the needle.

CLARENCE TRIES TO PULL HIS HAND FREE.

CLARENCE: Going back down the scale now. Pecan, Walnut, Peanut. Long way away from Scorched Almond. Almond good, peanut bad. You can go back in the box Mr peanut. Mr very big peanut.

CULLUM SITS WITH CLARENCE.

CLARENCE: Okay, well I'll just sit here. Holding hands. With Mr Grippy. Think I'll be paying Mr Pill Cupboard a visit a little later for Miss Valium. Or two. For me – not you.

THE LIGHTS BEGIN TO FADE.

CLARENCE: (BEAT) Well, isn't this great. Fun. A fun time. Had by all.

3.

Hospital. Meeting Room.

SPOTLIGHT. **CULLUM** sits in a chair wearing a hospital gown.

Throughout the scene we hear **DISCORDANT SOUNDS: SOUND FX, DISTORTED VOICES** revolving around the stage.

SOUND.

CULLUM: My name is Cullum and I'm … I'm here. Isn't that enough?

SOUND.

CULLUM: This is my first … I don't know what I'm meant to … Do I … Are there rules? The guy in the bed next to me says there are rules … in the … There are rules.

DISTORTED VOICE.

CULLUM: My name is Cullum. And I'm - I already said that.

SOUND. DISTORTED VOICE.

CULLUM: Start at the … What's the ...

DISTORTED VOICE.

CULLUM: My name is Cullum Ryan. And I'm … You don't say that. You don't say your …
"This is your life. This is who you are."
My - I was lying on the floor in this motel room. I was on the carpet … I was …
Michelle. She left me, lying on the carpet in that shit hole. I could've …
She's meant to be my wife!

DISTORTED VOICE.

CULLUM: Then what is it about?

SOUND.

CULLUM: And I don't deserve this! This … place. There's nothing wrong with me!

DISTRORTED VOICE.

CULLUM: I want this to be over. I want to get out of here.

SOUND

CULLUM: My name is Cullum. And I'm a - It doesn't matter what I am!
I'm … I'm …

SOUND, BUILDING.

CULLUM SLAPS HIMSELF HARD ACROSS THE FACE.

CULLUM: I hate. (SLAP) I hate. (SLAP) I hate!

SILENCE. DISTORTED VOICE.

CULLUM: (BECOMING DESPERATE) I don't remember where it started!
I was in this motel room.
Lying on the floor.
Michelle is holding this piece of mirror.
Her hand is bleeding.
There's someone in the mirror.
He's looking straight at me.
I know that face.
It's … It's … me.
And for the first time …
Right down here (HE PUNCHES HIS GUT) I know.
And I hate every single fibre of what I am.
And the only way to escape that feeling is another drink.

SOUND

CULLUM: Is that enough? Can I go now?