

SFX: AN UNDERGROUND TRAIN APPROACHING.

CHARLIE glances along the 'platform' again.

CHARLIE: I don't see you doing a victory dance yet.

RODGERS laughs. He starts to dance a mocking victory jig.

CHARLIE glances at the approaching train, at RODGERS and back at the train again.

Without warning, CHARLIE pushes RODGERS onto the 'tracks', into the path of the 'oncoming train'.

BLACKOUT.

SFX: A LOUD SQUEAL OF THE UNDERGROUND TRAIN'S BRAKES AND, PERHAPS, A SICKENING THUD.

CHARLIE: Guess the best man won.

Scene 15

A police interview room.

CHARLIE being formally interviewed by TWO POLICE OFFICERS; one male, one female. He's accompanied by the firm's LAWYER.

MALE OFF: So, you're rivals for a prestigious overseas posting but you didn't push him?

CHARLIE: Of course I didn't push him. He was very confident he'd land the job and was ribbing me about it a bit. We'd always have this sort of banter.

FEMALE OFF: So you were friends, not rivals?

CHARLIE: Friendly rivals. I always thought he'd get it over me, though, being younger, and I was fine with that. My son's about to get married, baby on the way. Believe me, I was fine with missing out on the African job so I could be here for my family.

The FEMALE POLICE OFFICER pushes some grainy CCTV screenshots across the table. CHARLIE and the LAWYER lean over and glance at them.

MALE OFF: The CCTV footage clearly shows you pushing him onto the tracks. What do you have to say to that, Mister Stuart?

CHARLIE: It may look like that, but that wasn't what I was doing at all. I was trying to grab him.

The MALE POLICE OFFICER sits back and crosses his arms.

MALE OFF: And you expect us to believe that, do you?

CHARLIE: I was trying to save him.

The MALE POLICE OFFICER grins at CHARLIE.

MALE OFF: We'll let the courts decide that, shall we?

FEMALE OFF: Charles Stuart, I'm arresting you for the murder of James Rodgers-

CHARLIE: What? You can't be serious?

The LAWYER puts his hand on CHARLIE's arm.

LAWYER: It's all right, Charlie, I'll handle this.

Horrific realisation of his immediate fate begins to dawn on CHARLIE.

MALE OFF: We'll need you to surrender your passport.

CHARLIE turns to the lawyer.

CHARLIE: What about bail?

FEMALE OFF: Not a chance, sunshine.

CHARLIE: They can't do this, can they?

The LAWYER nods his head.

What happens next?

The MALE POLICE OFFICER gets to his feet.

MALE OFF: We've got a nice cell for you to spend the night in. Then you're in front of a judge.

Scene 16

Courts of Justice: Judge's chambers

A haggard-looking CHARLIE and his LAWYER stand facing a JUDGE as Charlie's ARRESTING OFFICERS plead their case.

JUDGE: You want bail refused, passport to be confiscated, and to proceed to trial.

FEMALE OFF: Yes, Your Honour.

The JUDGE sifts through some papers, her brow furrowing as she reads.

The POLICE OFFICERS glance at each other, concerned.

The JUDGE looks up. She levels her gaze at CHARLIE.

JUDGE: Mister Stuart. Have you anything you'd like to add?

CHARLIE glances at his LAWYER, who's look suggests he's lost all hope.

CHARLIE: I didn't do it, Your Honour! I've never been in trouble before in my life--

JUDGE: That's all well and good but--

CHARLIE: Rodgers – Jim! – was a mate. We worked together closely on this Africa deal and we had a great deal of respect for one another. I couldn't believe it when he started demonstrating an African tribal dance. I didn't think he was a racist but when he started...I didn't think it was appropriate. I thought he must have been drinking.

JUDGE: The toxicology report says he hadn't been.

CHARLIE: Well, he lost his footing in any case. That's when I reached out and tried to grab him, pull him back.

The POLICE OFFICERS stare at CHARLIE, shaking their heads. The JUDGE turns to them.

JUDGE: Do you have any further evidence? Other than the CCTV?

FEMALE OFF: No, Your Honour.

JUDGE: Witnesses?

MALE OFF: No, Your Honour.

JUDGE: Not even the driver of the train?

The POLICE OFFICERS lower and shake their heads, indicating a 'no'.

Not one passenger on the platform saw Mister Stuart push Mister Rodgers?

FEMALE OFF: No one's been able to testify to that, exactly. It was only afterwards that people were aware of an incident.

JUDGE: I see.

The JUDGE contemplates for a few moments.

The POLICE OFFICERS shuffle uneasily.

CHARLIE stares at the JUDGE. He swallows, resigned to his fate but determined to retain his dignity.

You've heard of the phrase, 'Justice delayed is Justice denied'?

It's a rhetorical question. She doesn't wait for a response.

Not only is the CCTV evidence inconclusive, it corroborates the version of events given by the accused.

The POLICE OFFICERS listen, their expressions stiffening.

CHARLIE glances at his LAWYER, hardly daring to believe the sliver of hope his ears appear to be suggesting.

Therefore, having weighed all the available facts in relation to this matter, I'm content the accused is telling the truth.

MALE OFF: But Your Honour--

The JUDGE raises her hand. Her tone changes, her displeasure evident.

JUDGE: On the evidence before me, it is my considered opinion that a properly instructed jury would not find the accused guilty. Therefore, there would not be a conviction.

FEMALE OFF: But Your Honour—

JUDGE: The Prosecution has to prove beyond reasonable doubt. This is not the case here. Case dismissed. You're free to go Mister Stuart.

CHARLIE stares in disbelief at first the JUDGE and then his LAWYER. The POLICE OFFICERS stare at CHARLIE, seething.

The POLICE OFFICERS exit, followed by the LAWYER.

The JUDGE slips off her judge's gown and takes off her judge's wig (if appropriate). She's now KATE.

KATE approaches CHARLIE. She stands before him. They stare at each other before KATE delivers a SLAP across CHARLIE's cheek. KATE turns on her heel and walks away/exits.

Scene 17

The boardroom of Charlie's firm, Edinburgh.

A meeting of the Senior Management Team, plus CHARLIE and the LAWYER.

OP. DIR: For an awful moment there I thought the whole Africa deal was fucked.

FIN. DIR: So did I. Do you realise how close we came to losing everything? From going under? If this had gone to trial...

CHARLIE looks down, saying nothing.

LAWYER: Charlie didn't do anything. The judge threw it out. End of story. No harm done.

M.D.: No. No. Quite right. It's a terrible tragedy. That's all.

PERSONNEL: It must have been quite a shock to witness it, Charles. And not to mention the stress of being accused of...murder! Do you need to see someone? A counsellor, perhaps?

CHARLIE: No, no. I'm fine. I mean, I'm still quite shaken by it but--

M.D.: What was he thinking?

PERSONNEL: I guess we'll never know. M.D.: No. Such a shame, of course. Are you sure you're all right, Charles?

CHARLIE nods.

OP. DIR: In that case, you know what this means, Charlie?

CHARLIE stares blankly at the OPERATIONS DIRECTOR.

You're the one who's going to Africa. We'd better get your jabs organised.

Scene 18

Paul and Suma's flat.

SUMA is crying. PAUL enters, carrying a satchel.

PAUL: God! What a day. Hey, are you okay? What's wrong?

SUMA sniffles, wipes away her tears.

SUMA: Nothing. I don't know.

PAUL puts down his satchel.

PAUL: It's probably just your hormones.

SUMA: Just my hormones. Hmpf. Yes. I guess so. That must be it. Just my hormones.

PAUL: I didn't mean it like that.

PAUL approaches SUMA. He tries to kiss her. SUMA flinches and moves away.

Hey. Don't be like that. I'm sorry.

SUMA doesn't answer. PAUL goes to his satchel. He opens it and rummages inside.

I got you something. Well, it's for the baby, really.

PAUL produces a child's stuffed toy, maybe a giraffe or other African animal.

SUMA bursts into tears.

PAUL: What is it? Suma, what's wrong?

SUMA: I don't know! You. Me. Everything!

PAUL, upset, stares at SUMA, at a loss as to how to react.

FADE.

SFX: THE 'THWACK' OF TENNIS BALLS BEING HIT.

Scene 19

A tennis court, Edinburgh.

CHARLIE playing tennis with JEREMY. It's the end of the game. JEREMY is about to serve.

JEREMY: Match point.

JEREMY serves. It's an ace.

CHARLIE: Argh!

The two men walk towards the 'net'.

JEREMY: You're much better than I thought. That was too close for comfort.

They shake hands. CHARLIE holds JEREMY in a vice-like grip, squeezing mercilessly, not letting go. JEREMY squirms in pain.

Ahh...

CHARLIE: When I get back from Africa you'll have finished it with Kate, understood?

JEREMY flinches. He nods his head, grimacing in pain. CHARLIE lets go of JEREMY's hand.

JEREMY: Fuck you. No wonder Kate's playing away.

Quick as a flash CHARLIE stabs JEREMY in the Adams apple with the tips of his fingers. JEREMY drops to the ground, choking and writhing in agony. CHARLIE throws his tennis racket at JEREMY for good measure and walks away/exits.

It takes JEREMY a few moments to recover from CHARLIE's blow. Rubbing his throat, JEREMY ponders his next move.

Decision made, JEREMY angrily rushes to his bag. He digs out his mobile phone and makes a call. He face shows his fury as he waits for Kate to pick up.

JEREMY: Your bastard husband--

FADE.

Scene 20

Charlie and Kate's house, Edinburgh: dining room.

CHARLIE and KATE face each other, post-dinner. The atmosphere is awkward.

CHARLIE: *(together)* I want us to renew our vows--

KATE: *(together)* I want a divorce.

CHARLIE: What?

KATE: What? Whatever for?

CHARLIE: A divorce?

KATE: We're obviously travelling in different directions.

CHARLIE: Kate. I know things have been distant between us--

KATE: Distant? We're on different planets.

CHARLIE: But...why now? I'm flying to Africa the day after tomorrow for God's sake! And what about Paul and Suma?

KATE: What about them?

CHARLIE: They just got married! We're going to be grandparents!

KATE: We'll still be grandparents. Just not together.

CHARLIE: But—

KATE: As for the timing...well, that can't be helped. Better you should know, how I feel, before you go.

CHARLIE: I don't understand.

KATE: Stop the pretence, Charles. I've had enough of pretending.

CHARLIE: Some last supper. How long's it been going on?

KATE takes her time to answer.

KATE: Long enough to be serious.

CHARLIE: What? Are you going to marry him?

KATE: Maybe.

CHARLIE: I bought you golf lessons with him for your birthday!

KATE: Yes, well...one of your best presents ever. Sorry.

CHARLIE: He's half your age! How can there be a future in it?

KATE: He's not half my age. And there's only ten years' difference between us.

CHARLIE: The grass isn't always greener.

KATE: How would you know?

SUMA enters to slow, gentle, romantic music.

KATE is as a statue as CHARLIE gets up and joins SUMA. It's a flashback to New Year's Eve.

SUMA encourages a reluctant CHARLIE to dance. They giggle, drunk, as CHARLIE tries to catch the groove.

SUMA: That's it. Wow! You're a really good dancer, Charlie.

CHARLIE: Hardly. Two left feet.

SUMA shimmies closer. The dance is getting sexier.

SUMA: You dance better than your son.

CHARLIE: Where is he?

SUMA: Bed. He can't take his whisky like you can.

SUMA snuggles up to CHARLIE as they dance. They're dangerously close to crossing the Rubicon, and CHARLIE knows it. But he snaps out of his trance and looks at his watch.

CHARLIE: Good Lord! Is that the time? I should get going.

SUMA reaches out and grabs CHARLIE's arms.

SUMA: Stay.

CHARLIE: I should go. See if Kate's okay.

SUMA: She left hours ago. With a manufactured migraine. She's fine.

CHARLIE pulls his arms free.

CHARLIE: 'Manufactured migraine'?

SUMA grabs CHARLIE's arms again.

SUMA: She didn't want to be here.

SUMA manipulates CHARLIE's arms around her.

She doesn't like me. Your wife. She's back at your flat. Leave her.

CHARLIE tries to disentangle himself from SUMA. She pulls him closer, leading him into more intimate moves.

Dance with me, Charlie. It's just you and me. In this moment.
Just....us.

CHARLIE and SUMA stare at each other.

CHARLIE: You're a remarkable woman.

SUMA: You like me, Charlie?

CHARLIE: Of course I—

SUMA plants a kiss on CHARLIE's lips. CHARLIE tries to pull away. SUMA pulls him closer.

CHARLIE: No. This is wrong.

SUMA: It feels right.

CHARLIE: How can it?

SUMA drops her arms, letting CHARLIE go, the spell between them broken. She's at a loss as to how to answer.

SUMA: I'm an orphan from Rwanda.

CHARLIE: Don't tell me. You have Daddy issues.

CHARLIE's jokey but insensitive remark stings. SUMA turns away. Panicked, afraid that he's lost their 'moment', CHARLIE pulls her back. SUMA turns to face him. They stare at each other. Deep down they both want this.

SUMA: Please, Daddy.

CHARLIE: No.

SUMA smiles. They both move in for a kiss. The kiss is tender, like they are both afraid of hurting the other.

I think I'm the one with the issues.

SUMA: What are your issues, Charlie? Apart from your bitch of a wife.

CHARLIE: Work. Paul. You. You're definitely one of them.

SUMA kisses CHARLIE again. It's a longer kiss. They pull back, stare at each other. Then SUMA breaks away and exits.

With the flashback over, CHARLIE resumes his seat opposite KATE.

KATE and CHARLIE glare at each other.

Well. We'll talk again when I get back from Africa, shall we?

FADE.