

THE ARGUMENT

by Andrew Shakeshaft

CAST

MALE

LEON
CARL
TAYLOR
DAD - FELIX

FEMALE

SOPHIA
MUM - MARGARET
PHILLIPA

It is written into the script that Phillipa and Mum are played by the same actor. But this needn't be so. There is enough to do for each of these parts to be separated.

Dad - Felix is a smaller role. At a pinch, the role could be shared with the actor playing Carl. This would mean that Carl is not at Mum's funeral, but as this is not a speaking section of the play, it wouldn't matter much. At the end, when Leon shouts at Felix's door, Felix doesn't speak. We needn't even see him. Someone could partially open the door and it could then shut on Leon's protests as instructed.

So the play is suitable for 3 or 4 male and 2 or 3 females.

PLOT

Sophia is being cheated on by Leon. He, however, wants both to have his cake and to eat it, so is keeping Sophia strung along while meeting Phillipa, a married actress, every Friday in a local hotel. Sophia is already having to cope with the death and funeral of her mother. She needs to feel supported by her friend Taylor and partner, Leon.

Things start to unravel for Leon when he is caught on a reporter's camera leaving the hotel shortly before Phillipa. Because of Phillipa's fame, the photo is splashed all over the papers. Leon swears that he was just delivering something she left on the film set, to her at her hotel. Can Sophia believe him? She veers between belief and doubt, as do the audience due to Leon's plausibility. Taylor doesn't like Leon but still thinks she should give him the benefit of the doubt - until Taylor sees him with Phillipa in a compromising position. Carl is Leon's old friend from school. He knows Leon from old, likes him but doesn't trust him and feels protective of Sophia.

We watch as Leon's cheating ways are finally exposed. His friends rally round Sophia, who becomes stronger once she has had the courage to leave him. Leon, deserted by Phillipa and by Sophia, as well as Carl, is left in the end completely on his own.

The play runs at approx. one hour fifteen minutes. It is easy to reduce the scenes, which mainly involve two actors at a time, and to pick scenes without certain characters, to reduce the number of players. Andrew Shakeshaft is an award-winning playwright and many of his plays have been professionally performed.

EXTRACT ONE

LEON ...So you want an argument? You want me all angry and out of control, do you? You want to over-react and get us both ripping lumps out of each other? Standing on the furniture screaming at each other? Okay. [**He jumps onto the table.**] Here I am, in your face, screaming! Does that help? Is it better?

SOPHIA Stop it!

LEON Scream at me. Let it out. Then you'll feel better and we can ...

SOPHIA How can I feel better?

LEON That's all you want...You don't care what's true or not. You just want the Greek restaurant, plate smashing, nails-out-scratching argument so you can feel that adrenaline rush, make it feel like you've done something, lived a little.

SOPHIA Shut up!

LEON That's it - let it out!

SOPHIA Are you screwing her?

Pause.

LEON **getting off the table as he speaks** Well there we go. That's it, isn't it? That's what you wanted to say. So why do we need all of this - whatever it is?

SOPHIA Don't.

LEON I'm just.

SOPHIA Don't.

LEON Look...

SOPHIA Don't.

LEON Okay. [**Backing off.**] Well - do you...?

SOPHIA Don't! Don't pad it out. Don't make it sound good.

LEON Do you trust me?

Sophia rolls her eyes and shrugs, frustrated at his avoidance of the question.

LEON What is that? You can't do all of the screaming and then... do that. We're getting into it now. This is the business end of the argument. This is what you want, isn't it? You want us to solve this problem.

SOPHIA Do I?

LEON You want answers.

SOPHIA Did you screw her?

LEON Do you trust me?

SOPHIA **instantly** No... You did screw her.

Leon throws his hands up in mock despair.

SOPHIA Ha! See? You do it too. What is that?

LEON There's no point, is there?

SOPHIA Did you?

LEON You won't believe me, whatever I say.

SOPHIA Did you?

LEON You only want me to say what you want to hear.

SOPHIA Did you?

LEON And what is that? What do you want me to say? Which word makes this better?

SOPHIA I want the truth.

LEON No, you don't! You want me to lie to you. You want me to make something up which makes all of these emotions that you're feeling right now - right. You don't want to be wrong. You don't want to have made all

SOPHIA this fuss over nothing.
Stop it!
LEON So I've got to invent something which says yes and no at the same time.
'Yes, you're right to be angry but no, I've not done anything wrong.' It's insane!

Pause.

SOPHIA Did you?

Pause.

LEON No.

Pause.

SOPHIA So why...
LEON And it starts again! She's not happy with that answer, must keep arguing.
Doesn't trust him so must keep stabbing away till she gets what she wants....

.....

LEON I don't want to argue.
SOPHIA Because of the flowers?
LEON Because of the funeral. It's not fair to...
SOPHIA Not fair? On who? Me?
LEON You've got too much on.
SOPHIA So arguing would only tire me out? Poor little girl that I am?
LEON I'm trying to be nice.
SOPHIA So don't cheat on me. That would be a *nice* start, wouldn't it?
LEON I haven't done.

Sophia rushes to the back of the stage and grabs a pile of newspapers from a cupboard.

LEON I don't know what I can do to ...
SOPHIA Look at it! [**Sophia starts throwing the newspapers at Leon, who backs away and covers himself with his hands as he does so.**] It's all here- every last little detail. How my boyfriend skulks off to hotel rooms and private rented flats to ...
LEON It's not real! They make it up. Phillipa said ...

Pause. Leon realises he's said her name.

SOPHIA Phillipa?
LEON I'll tidy these up. [**He starts picking up the newspapers.**]
SOPHIA So you do know her?
LEON And they make it up. Because she's famous. They just want something to fill up their pages.
SOPHIA How did you meet her?
LEON We didn't *meet*. That makes it sound ...
SOPHIA Phillipa.
LEON I was delivering to the set. She's got a part in that new ...
SOPHIUA I know what she's got a part in! I got to read it. I got to read your name next to hers in every single paper.
LEON Just the tabloids.
SOPHIA **laughing** What?

LEON She's married to this ...
SOPHIA Stop telling me stuff I know. I know who she is. I know her whole life from those. [*Indicating the newspapers - which Leon puts down as if he can't bear touching them.*] I want to know why there's a picture of you walking out of a hotel in Manchester on Friday night, followed five minutes later by her - Phillipa. When you had lied to me.

Beat. Sophia is giving Leon a chance to talk.

SOPHIA Nothing to say?
LEON I didn't think you'd finished.
SOPHIA Why did you lie to me?
LEON I knew what it would have looked like.
SOPHIA *pointing at the newspapers* This! This is what it looks like!
LEON No. I don't want to argue with you.
SOPHIA So stop.
LEON I said to you I was going to see Carl. I was. And then there was this text message, from her. It's twenty minutes out of the way - just to drop something off. Then I went to see Carl. I didn't lie to you.
SOPHIA A delivery?
LEON She'd left something at the set. I'd said I could drop stuff over to her.
SOPHIA Pathetic.
LEON This is why I didn't tell you. Because you'd want to argue and there's nothing to argue about. However much you scream and shout, it's nothing. It means nothing.
SOPHIA It means something to me....

EXTRACT TWO

This scene takes place in a pub, where Leon has arranged to meet his friend Carl, to borrow a suit from him for the funeral. Carl has been very cool with him and plonked a sheet of paper with all the names of the girls Leon has cheated on printed out.

LEON Oh, I see.
CARL Do you?
LEON You're being subtle.
CARL No. I'm being aggressive. Without picking up a chair and smashing it into your tiny little, ignorant face... Which is what I should do.
LEON *stands up* Go on then.
CARL Sit down.
LEON *pulling over a chair* Here's one. Looks good. And here's my little face...
CARL And what would that achieve?
LEON It would make you feel better.
CARL And you think that would end it? Big dramatic moment - air cleared - all back to normal? She's thirty-two.
LEON Who is?
CARL Phillipa whatever-her-surname is.
LEON *still standing. Aggressive* So?
CARL Going to run off with her, were you? Big happy marriage on a tropical island?
LEON You still talking?
CARL Sit down. I'm not going to hit you with a chair. You're past the age where someone gives you a smack and then it's all forgotten.
LEON I did not... NOT ... sleep with her. I did not kiss her. I got my photo taken walking out of a hotel.
CARL Of course you did.

LEON You don't believe me? I thought at least ...
CARL **pointing to the sheet of paper** Ten names. Ten girls - or women. You've always done it, didn't matter what age you were. You lied to every single one of them. You told Sally you'd love her for ever and take her to the ball, only you didn't because you took Emma, who you lied to, telling her that you weren't seeing anyone else...
LEON I was seventeen.
CARL Claudia. You were twenty-one. I had to stop her from calling the police because she thought you'd killed yourself after you went missing.
LEON She was a nut case.
CARL You left her with three months rent to pay on your flat, while you pissed off with - Christ, I don't know - whichever one was next...
LEON Is there a point to this?
CARL Sit down.
LEON Why? Why should I do things your way?
CARL People are staring at you.
CARL So? Why should that bother you?
CARL Because I'm your friend. And I've had to bail you out so many times, when you've run off...
LEON Are you feeling unwanted? Do you want a hug?
CARL Don't do it to her!
LEON I've not done anything.
CARL That would be a first.
LEON So you're tired of picking up after me.
CARL Well said.
LEON Sod off.
CARL She's thirty-two.
LEON And it's fine, because I went nowhere near her.
CARL Again - that would be a first.

Carl puts one foot up onto one of the bar chairs and Leon suddenly kicks it away, jolting Carl upright.

LEON You sanctimonious prick! I have made mistakes in my life, probably more than you have - but that's only because you don't actually do anything. Look at you! Judging me because you think the world's all got to be made right. I broke up with girls. I lied to some of them. That's life.

Carl stands up and faces Leon. Leon calms down a bit.

LEON Why won't anyone believe me?
CARL Sophia giving you a hard time?
LEON She gives me a hard time if I'm five minutes late from a night out. I was expecting it. But not ...
CARL Don't screw her over.
LEON Who?
CARL Sophia.
LEON **smiles** I'm sorry?
CARL She doesn't deserve it.

Beat.

LEON She'd be better off with someone like you?
CARL I didn't say...
LEON Pathetic.
CARL That's not what I meant.
LEON Did you speak to her?
CARL When?

LEON So you did! I knew it!
 CARL No, I haven't ... Did she say something?
 LEON Is that what happens? Is that what this list is? I screw up, I break up with someone and you move in. You're the shoulder to cry on. Nice Carl, *he* won't lie to me. *He* won't break up with me. Carl's perfect - a real gentleman.

CARL Leon...
 LEON You talked her up to it, didn't you? She's wound up enough. The funeral's tomorrow.

CARL I haven't...
 LEON And you're there - in her ear: 'What if he did? He's done it before... Do you want to cry? ...'

CARL I've not done any of that.
 LEON She doesn't need any encouragement, trust me. It's easy from the outside, isn't it? When you don't have anyone, it's easy to look at everyone else and pick holes in what they're doing wrong.

CARL Sit down.
 LEON I've not done anything wrong.

CARL I'm sorry.
 LEON I've got to go.
 CARL Don't.
 LEON Is this the suit?
 CARL Yes. The blue one's...
 LEON Can I still borrow it?
 CARL Course... Leon, I'm sorry.
 LEON I've got a funeral tomorrow. She's going to be in bits. I don't need all this...
 CARL I didn't say you did it.

Beat.

LEON What?
 CARL I'm just saying that...
 LEON You're saying that if I did do it, don't do it to her, because you fancy her...
 CARL No.
 LEON So what are you saying?
 CARL I know you...

EXTRACT THREE

SOPHIA I want to talk.
 TAYLOR Okay. [***Pulls up a chair and sits facing Sophia.***] I'm listening.
 SOPHIA When I was talking, I was looking at him...
 TAYLOR ***interrupting, holding a finger up to silence her*** One rule.
 SOPHIA What?
 TAYLOR Because we've done this too many times. And every time, whatever I've said, or what you've said, nothing's changed. You'll run back to him, and I'll have to smile and say lovely things about it - how it was always the right decision...

SOPHIA Why are you being so harsh?
 TAYLOR Because I can be. Because I love you - as your friend. What are we about to do? If you're going to unload on me and then run back to him, because it's made you feel better - then I don't want to. Because it just makes me feel like crap.

SOPHIA Like I'm using you?

TAYLOR Yes.
SOPHIA You've never said.
TAYLOR I'm saying now.
SOPHIA Why?
TAYLOR Because we've done this far too many times.

Beat. Sophia runs her hands down her face and then looks at Taylor.

SOPHIA Okay.
TAYLOR Okay.
SOPHIA **taking a deep breath** He cheated on me.
TAYLOR Did he?
SOPHIA Yes. He cheated on me.
TAYLOR Okay.
SOPHIA You don't believe me.
TAYLOR Is that important?
SOPHIA Course it is. What's the point in me saying stuff if you're not going to...
TAYLOR What if it's not true?
SOPHIA **rising** I don't want to do this.
TAYLOR But what if he didn't? Has he said he did?
SOPHIA Course he hasn't.
TAYLOR And what if he's telling the truth?
SOPHIA You're supposed to be on my side.
TAYLOR I am. What if he didn't do it? Isn't that better?
SOPHIA You hate him. He hates you...
TAYLOR Thanks.
SOPHIA It's true. Why take his side now?
TAYLOR Because this isn't a kid's game any more. This is you trying to get rid of him.
SOPHIA No, I'm not.
TAYLOR Or it's you stamping your feet and having a tantrum because you can't get your own way.
SOPHIA Shut up!
TAYLOR Do you want it to be true?
SOPHIA No.
TAYLOR So why are you trying so hard to make it true? He's denied it. You can't believe the crap they print in the papers, surely? You wouldn't the rest of the time. But now it's something you can wallow in, you decide to make it true.
SOPHIA **forceful** Can you go, please?
TAYLOR No.
SOPHIA I am not wallowing.
TAYLOR You're enjoying it.
SOPHIA He said that.
TAYLOR And I don't like saying it, but may be he's right.
SOPHIA Please go.
TAYLOR You've got so much going on right now...
SOPHIA Yes. I have.
TAYLOR And this is a really nice distraction.
SOPHIA Nice?
TAYLOR Because you don't want to think about the funeral and living the rest of your life after that's all over. So you start a different fight. A fight about something which you can control. You'll kick out against Leon till the anger's gone and you feel numb and then, maybe, you'll move on...'

EXTRACT FOUR

Sophia is sitting in the funeral chapel talking to her dead mother, Margaret.

MARGARET Never make the ridiculous assumption that you are the centre of the universe. Never believe that the way I have acted towards you is in any way a reflection of my true personality. I am a generous, warm, caring individual. I loved your father with every breath in my body and he loved me the same. You should remember, my girl, that you have only known me as the old woman who had the life ripped out from the inside of her. Bait me all you want. Abuse me. Invent a person in your head who doesn't care about you or the world and would rather dust and iron her way towards death. But understand that life is a damn sight more complicated than you have ever realised.

Pause.

SOPHIA I'm sorry.

Margaret dusts the coffin.

SOPHIA Why couldn't you talk like this before? Why did it always have to be bottled up? If you were thinking these things, why didn't you talk to me?

MARGARET If I was thinking them... What else would I have been thinking?

SOPHIA You might have been happy. Everything on the outside said you were happy.

MARGARET Well, everything on the outside of you right now is angry and hostile and couldn't care less if that coffin self-combusted right now and saved you ten minutes out of your precious day, because then you wouldn't have to sit through the ceremony.

SOPHIA Well maybe it's genetic. I can't help it.

MARGARET So what are you really thinking?

SOPHIA I'm thinking - I'm going to miss you. I've never even had a proper conversation with you, and I'm going to miss you. I don't want this...

MARGARET We're talking now.

SOPHIA You know that doesn't count.

Beat.

MARGARET I love you.

SOPHIA It doesn't count.

MARGARET But it might make you feel better.

SOPHIA **looking at Margaret** Maybe.

MARGARET I love you, Sophia.

SOPHIA Don't die, Mum.

They embrace. Sophia is crying as they release. Margaret sits down.

MARGARET Now. What should your mother be doing about now...?

SOPHIA What?

MARGARET Come on. I must be wanting to do something.

SOPHIA **smiles** You'd be wanting to ask me why the music you chose isn't on. And then I'd be explaining to you that the picture of you outside here is in very bad taste. People do not advertise the chapel of rest they're in with a sepia photograph taken thirty years ago. And you'd be defending

yourself to the hilt. And I'd be getting angry. And you'd be calling me 'dear' in a very patronising way, and I'd swear at you, and you'd smile and tell me to grow my hair because it makes me look like a boy. Is that enough?

MARGARET **emphasising 'nice'** I think that will do nicely.

They both smile.

MARGARET So. [**Going into an act.**] Why's it so quiet in here?

SOPHIA **wiping her tears and joining in** Is it?

MARGARET Yes. I ... where's my music?

SOPHIA Oh Christ!

MARGARET Don't blaspheme, dear. Not in God's house.

SOPHIA There are thirty-two chapels of rest in this place. It's not God's house. He doesn't rent them out as apartments.

MARGARET Don't be flippant and don't change the subject. Where is my music?

SOPHIA I turned it off.

MARGARET Why would you do that? It's supposed to be setting the mood.

SOPHIA It's cheesy.

MARGARET There is nothing - I don't even know what you mean by that word...

There is nothing wrong with Kate Bush. And what was wrong with my photo outside? That's a very good photo of me.

SOPHIA It's from when you were - sixteen? How is anyone coming to pay their respects ever going to recognise you?

MARGARET It's a very good likeness.

SOPHIA You look like a fat Ava Gardner.

MARGARET I shall take that as a compliment.

SOPHIA A fat, ugly Ava Gardner.

The lights begin to fade slightly.

MARGARET You really should think about growing your hair. You could look so pretty.

SOPHIA **smiles** Piss off, Mother.

MARGARET Sophia, dear. It does make you look like a builder.

SOPHIA It makes me look like me, Mother.

MARGARET Do you want to look like a builder, is that it?

SOPHIA Why couldn't we do this before?

Beat.

MARGARET Because some people can and some people can't.

SOPHIA But why couldn't we?

MARGARET Because if we all said everything we were thinking, all of the time ...

There's no room for complete honesty, sweetheart. That's why we argue about the little things. Because if we talked about the big, real, scary things all of the time, no one would ever get along.

SOPHIA I love you.

MARGARET That doesn't really count, does it, dear?

SOPHIA I love you.

MARGARET I'm not really here....

EXTRACT FIVE

Shortly after Sophia's dead mother disappears, enter the next illusion - Phillipa, the actress Leon has been branded as sleeping with. The next time we meet Phillipa, she

is the real person, but in this scene she has been conjured up by Sophia's fevered imagination.

PHILLIPA You must be under a lot of stress.
SOPHIA It's been a difficult week.
PHILLIPA Poor you.
SOPHIA I don't ...
PHILLIPA Your mother was a good-looking woman. Which one do you take after?
SOPHIA Do I know you?
PHILIPPA Leon said you were mousey. I reckon he was close.
SOPHIA Do I know you?
PHILLIPA **quickly advancing on Sophia** Sit down!

Sophia stumbles backwards and sits. Phillipa leans forward, right in Sophia's face.

PHILLIPA I'm your worst nightmare. [**She smiles.**]
SOPHIA I...
PHILLIPA I'm the other woman, sweetheart. You want an argument with someone...? Here I am.
SOPHIA You're not really here.
PHILLIPA You've been under a lot of stress.
SOPHIA **trying to chant her way out of the illusion** You're not here, You are not here.
PHILLIPA I really am. [**Mocking.**] I really really am. My name's Phillipa..
SOPHIA **stopping her chant and looking up** Go away.
PHILLIPA Why wouldn't he want someone else? Look at you!
SOPHIA That's not you. You're not saying that.
PHILLIPA He said you couldn't kiss! Who can't kiss?
SOPHIA **ignoring** I've had a lot on. It's been...
PHILLIPA I'm everything you expected, aren't I? You practically wished for me. Like a little girl imagining monsters under the bed...

Sophia looks up, lost.

PHILLIPA ...I'm prettier than you, more experienced, sharper witted - so probably cleverer. Yes, let's say cleverer. You want me to exist. When you saw that picture of me walking out of the hotel, you were delighted. Admit it. Admit it!

SOPHIA Yes.
PHILLIPA Why?
SOPHIA Because ... Because ...
PHILLIPA Because then every paranoid little thought you've ever had about him became true. You're not crazy. It's okay. Every time you've followed him to work in your car but made sure he didn't see you. Every time you hung around outside a door after you'd left, making sure he wasn't calling someone. None of it was you being - what should we say? - off your head! Psycho!

SOPHIA No.
PHILLIPA And I'm exactly who you imagined him leaving you for. So here I am.
SOPHIA I love him.
PHILLIPA Tell him that. See if he still cares... You sure I can't smoke? Since I'm not here?

SOPHIA He's going to leave me.
PHILLIPA Only if you're right. [**Beat.**] ... Are you? Or are you just making it up again?
SOPHIA I haven't made it up.
PHILLIPA Sure about that?...

EXTRACT SIX

Chapel music continues and is joined by the low murmur of mourners. The lights come up on a small area just outside the chapel. Felix is sitting on a stool, walking stick supporting most of his weight as he leans forward. Leon approaches him.

LEON Mr Jowett, they want us to ... [*Leans down to help Felix up.*]

FELIX *quietly* Please don't touch me.

LEON I'm sorry. I was just...

FELIX *looking up* Hunh?

Pause. Felix stares at Leon.

LEON They want us to start taking our seats.

FELIX *continuing to stare at Leon* Good.

Beat.

LEON Can I help you up?

FELIX *mumbles* Don't need your help...

LEON *not hearing* Sorry?

FELIX *looking up at Leon, slowly* I don't need your help.

LEON *understanding* Okay.

Leon sits down next to Felix. Felix stares ahead of himself, appearing to ignore him.

LEON Can I talk to you?

Felix doesn't move.

LEON I'll just sit here and talk then. As if I'm saying it to myself, but you just happen to be here.

Felix raises an eyebrow, nothing more.

LEON Your daughter is very, very special to me.

Felix grunts a response.

LEON I would never hurt her. I want you to know that.

Felix turns and looks at Leon. Then he turns back to his staring out front position again.

LEON And you can think what you want. And you can say what you want.

Beat. Leon looks at Felix, who glances at him - but only briefly.

LEON Or you can stay completely silent and try and make out that you're doing your best for her. But I'll tell you this - with due respect: I am what is best for your daughter.

Felix gives a small sarcastic laugh.

LEON And you may not think it. And I am not going to ... I don't *need* to prove to you that I am right for her and that I am going to take care of her. Okay?

Beat. Felix turns his head.

FELIX What are you sitting here for then?...

EXTRACT SEVEN

Phillipa has just told Leon to get out, she's tired of him.

LEON This was fun - wasn't it?

PHILLIPA You won't change my mind.

LEON You must have lied to him.

PHILLIPA Who? [**Realising.**] Oh ...

LEON Did you argue?

PHILLIPA No.

LEON Lucky.

PHILLIPA Not really. He does the lost silent thing. Just won't talk to me.

LEON I'd prefer that.

PHILLIPA You would, because you're a man. Easier to ignore all of your emotions if you never talk about them.

LEON We're talking.

PHILLIPA We are. And I'm telling you to leave. And you're not going to argue.

LEON I'm not.

PHILLIPA You're still here. You sitting there means you're arguing. If you weren't, you'd have gone.

LEON I love you.

PHILLIPA Do you tell her that too?

LEON You weren't going to talk about it. You're kicking me out.

PHILLIPA I am.

Leon holds his hands out to her, waiting to be kicked out.

PHILLIPA You're still here.

LEON Because you don't want me to go.

PHILLIPA You're confident, aren't you?

LEON Yes. [**Beat.**] But inside I'm all messed up. Because I don't want this to end.

PHILLIPA So you're just going to sit there until I change my mind.

LEON Works for me.

PHILLIPA And will I change my mind?

LEON **beat** Yes.

PHILLIPA I need to go back to him. I need to do the photo-shoot outside the front gate - me apologising to him, him forgiving me. I've got a part coming in this West End thing. I need that.

LEON And after that?

PHILLIPA I might call you.

LEON You will call me.

PHILLIPA I *might*...

LEON I might pick up.

They smile at each other.

PHILLIPA Would your ... [**Clicking her fingers, trying to remember.**] ... name?
LEON Sophia.
PHILLIPA Sweet. Will she ...?
LEON No.
PHILLIPA Sure?
LEON Yes. She's scared of her own shadow. She won't even ask about it again.
PHILLIPA **checking her watch** They need the room back in ... six minutes. Don't follow me out.
LEON You will call me.
PHILLIPA I *might* call you.

Leon smiles. Phillipa smiles back at him. Then exits. We hear her off-stage.

PHILLIPA Oh, hi ... It's not quite ready yet. We've got ... [**So Leon can hear.**] ... five and a half minutes. You can come back then?
TAYLOR **offstage** Okay, no problem, Miss.
PHILLIPA Thank you.

Beat. Leon smiles and stands up, feeling very pleased with himself. Taylor enters so that Leon can't see him.

TAYLOR Can I do your room now, sir?
LEON You've just been told ... We've got ... [**He turns and stops mid-sentence.**]
TAYLOR Yeah, she said. Five and a half minutes. That should be about enough time for me to say what I need to say....

EXTRACT EIGHT

There is the sound of a phone ringing. Lights come up to reveal Leon sitting on the end of a bed. Phillipa is in the background getting ready.

PHILLIPA Don't answer it.
LEON I've got to.
PHILLIPA You want me to talk to her?
LEON Just shut up!
PHILLIPA Nice. Thanks.
LEON Don't be like that.
PHILLIPA No, all yours.
LEON Please, sorry. I've got to ... [answer this.]

Phillipa holds up her hands in a 'fine' gesture. Leon answers his phone.

LEON Hey, babe. You okay?
SOPHIA Hey! I thought you weren't going to answer.
LEON No, sorry. I was ... You okay?
SOPHIA Yeah, I'm good. Really good.
LEON Cool.
SOPHIA You in town?
LEON Yeah, just in Costa.
SOPHIA I know this is a bit weird.
LEON No, it's not. Why's phoning me weird?
SOPHIA You don't know what I'm going to say yet.
LEON Okay, sorry.
SOPHIA **laughing** Sorry - I'm a bit buzzed. Not making much sense.

LEON **smiling with Sophia** You're sure you're ...
SOPHIA Yes,.. God, yes. Look, we haven't really... since the funeral and all that stuff that happened. We haven't really talked much, have we?
LEON Umm. I don't know.. I
SOPHIA I just wanted to say that I loved you more than anyone else - ever.
LEON **embarrassed** Um ... okay...
SOPHIA See? It is weird, isn't it? Just phoning you up to say that ...
LEON No, it's nice...
SOPHIA Nice? There's a word.
LEON I didn't mean that. It's gorgeous. That better?
SOPHIA No. But thank you.

She laughs. He joins her, slightly nervously.

SOPHIA Look, it's been - what? Three weeks since the funeral?
LEON Yeah.
SOPHIA And I've been thinking a lot, and it's been a really weird time, but it feels like I'm coming out of it now. Like we're coming out of it - yeah?
LEON **glancing at Phillipa** Yeah, I suppose it does.
SOPHIA And I've been holding off saying it, because it felt weird and stuff but I thought - if I called you, it'd be better...
LEON Okay - it *is* now starting to feel weird...
SOPHIA **laughs** I know, I know - sorry. I've got something amazing I want to tell you and it hasn't been - we haven't had the time together recently to properly talk, and so I need to tell you, because it's been bouncing round my head and I can't keep it in any longer... You still there?
LEON Yeah. Course I am. ... You sure you're okay?
SOPHIA Leon, honestly - I've never been happier. And it's such a strange feeling, because I thought I'd lost the ability to ... Know what I mean?
LEON You've had a tough time.
SOPHIA I have. But it's all going to be okay now. And we're not going to fight again, and we won't argue or bitch - or any of that stuff...
LEON Sounds good.
SOPHIA Leon ... I can't find the words... [**Deep breath.**] Leon, I'm leaving you.

Pause. Leon's expression changes. Sophia smiles with relief.

LEON What?
SOPHIA I'm leaving you. Don't ever, ever, ever come back here again. I've sold the house - well, I've put it on the market anyway - and I don't ever want to see you again. Ever. And that makes me so happy. And I'm not going to fight with you about it. And I'm not going to let you take my words and twist them round and push them back to me... Because you have nothing on me any more. ... And I loved you more than anyone else in my entire life... but now it's over. Like when the head falls off a flower - sad, inevitable ... but not life changing.
LEON Sophia, you can't ...
SOPHIA And we won't argue because I won't let you - because it won't help... Oh, almost forgot. Don't pick up your stuff, I've got it sorted... Taylor's outside and he's got this amazing bonfire-thing - like a dustbin with a chimney. It's awesome. Your deodorants exploded. It was fantastic - like fireworks! So don't worry about any of that...

Pause. Leon has no words.

LEON I ... Soph ... I ...
SOPHIA Bye, Leon. Thanks. But bye.

Sophia hangs up and the lights go out on her. Leon slumps.

PHILLIPA You okay?

LEON Ummm. Can I ...? Can I come back to yours tonight?

PHILLIPA Don't be ridiculous. [***She gets her coat to exit.***]

LEON Please...

PHILLIPA No. Mike's back tonight. You know that.

LEON I ...

PHILLIPA Sometimes it would be so much better if, instead of just talking, you started thinking ... Okay? See you Friday....