

‘The Saddleworth Constable’
by
Martin Paul Roche

AUDITION PIECES

Please ensure that you have read the complete play prior to the audition (available on request).

Further details about the roles may be found here:

<https://martinpaulroche.com/the-saddleworth-constable.html>

Performance dates: 26th September – 3rd October.

The rehearsal availability of those auditioning will be a consideration as part of the casting process.

Any queries, please email:
enquiries@martinpaulroche.com

Thank you!

SCENE 1

*A local arts exhibition in a church hall.
There is an easel with a painting on it.
LX:*

STEVE is standing front, facing out, looking at the painting; studying it, concentrating. An air of someone not very impressed with what he is looking at. SANDY wanders into the scene, looking around at 'the works' on display and then, over to STEVE.

SANDY Excuse me? Are you one of the exhibiting artists?
STEVE No.
SANDY Do you know who painted this one?
STEVE Me.
SANDY So, you are an exhibiting artist?
STEVE No.
SANDY Right.
STEVE Only recently started. Painting. At art class. No idea why. Especially now, standing here looking at it.
SANDY Perhaps, because there is something of you within it?
STEVE What? A tree in a field?
SANDY In the intent, the expression. A myriad of things.
STEVE Myriad is it? Right.
SANDY Are there any brochures or catalogues for the works being exhibited?
STEVE Catalogues? No chance. All proceeds are going to this place. Our beloved church hall. It was hard enough to get the vicar to let me have some tables. If he thought he could get away with it, he'd charge you for breathing his air in.
SANDY Are you local?
STEVE With this accent? Lived here all my life. Third generation at least. My gene pool is probably more like a dried up muddy puddle by now.
SANDY I'm visiting. Sort of. I saw the poster in the village. Thought I'd wander up and see what it was all about.

She looks at the painting. Considers it.

STEVE Well?
SANDY Well what?
STEVE You've not said owt.
SANDY About?
STEVE My painting.
SANDY I'm still considering it.
STEVE "Considering it." It's a tree in a field. What is there to consider?
SANDY A great deal.
STEVE I see. You know about this stuff then?
SANDY "Stuff." Art you mean? Some would say not.
STEVE And what would you say?
SANDY I write about it these days. I'm an arts correspondent for newspapers and magazines. I'm the 'go to' when someone wants a boring arts person to talk about boring arts things to an equally bored audience. I spend much of my time living in Paris. That's the part which makes boring bearable.
STEVE An expert then?
SANDY I did used to paint but I stopped.
STEVE Why was that?
SANDY Fell out of love with it I guess.
STEVE Can you fall out of love with a passion?
SANDY That's profound. I apparently did.
STEVE Odd thing to do when it's who you are.
SANDY Doubly profound. This runs the risk of turning into therapy. Let's just say, it's complicated.
STEVE Ahh. The 'get out of jail' answer for everything.
SANDY Is it?

STEVE Oh yeah. "It's complicated." Bit like the other ones: "Not right now." And "I need time to think." And my favourite "I need space."
SANDY And is this turning into a therapy session for both of us?
STEVE "Not right now."
SANDY "Do you need time to think?"
STEVE "Let's just say, I need space."
They laugh.

STEVE You must be qualified then. In art. Degree?
SANDY PhD.
STEVE A doctor. Know your stuff though I would guess. They don't hand them out for nowt.
SANDY I know what I know.
STEVE I see. Why are you here then?
SANDY Lived here. A lifetime ago. But the odd times I'm back home, it grounds me. Nobody ever allows you to think you're more than you are. People say it how it is. I don't think 'filters' ever found Saddleworth.
STEVE I'll give you that. You said 'home' though.
SANDY Yes. No great story to it. I was born here, I left here,
STEVE And didn't want to die here?
SANDY No, I just left.
STEVE Left or ran away?
SANDY Ouch. Therapy alert. Look, I'm the journalist. Do you always interrogate strangers?
STEVE Only the dodgy looking ones.
SANDY And do I look dodgy?
STEVE I'll give you the benefit. For now.
SANDY Then, thank you. For now.
STEVE Old habits die hard.
SANDY Meaning?
STEVE I'm a - was, a policeman. The local one. I was born here. Worked here. Never left here.
SANDY Or is it that you were too afraid to run away?
STEVE Touché, mon cher Docteur.
SANDY And now, taken up a new career as a landscape artist I see?
STEVE No, no, no. I've not taken up anything. Certainly not a career. And certainly not as an artist.
And now you're here, I'm doubting I'd describe that as a landscape.
SANDY I like it.
STEVE Really?
SANDY It's good. In fact, it's very good.
STEVE For a retired cop.
SANDY For a landscape artist, actually.
STEVE Give over.
SANDY No, I'm sure of it. I'd go as far as to say you're a bit of a find.
(They consider each other)

STEVE You know, you don't sound it.
SANDY Sound what? Sure?
STEVE Local.
SANDY Give it time. A day with my mother will bring my accent back.
STEVE Then I must know her.
SANDY Possibly. Anne she's called. She lives in the large house as you travel up towards ...
STEVE ... Dobcross. I know her. Very well. See her most days. But I've never seen you.
SANDY I guess I've been successful at staying below the radar.
STEVE And Saddleworth is your "go to" for that?
SANDY Sometimes.

She smiles, stares at him.

SANDY So, tell me, how do you know my mother?
STEVE She's a grumpy old cow.
SANDY And there it is.

STEVE What's that?
SANDY That inescapable Saddleworth bluntness.
STEVE Sorry, I just meant ...
SANDY That she's a grumpy old cow. No need to apologise. Yes, that's my mother alright. A lifetime captured in a sentence.
STEVE Small world though. Fancy you being Anne's daughter. Chuffin 'ell.

SANDY laughs.

STEVE What's so funny?
SANDY That phrase. "Chuffin 'ell." Not one I hear that much in Paris. It tells you that you're back in England. Like, a swallow in spring, the White Cliffs of Dover, a red telephone box, fish and chips, black pudding, Yorkshire pudding ... and your first "chuffin 'ell."

They laugh and then consider each other again..

SANDY Did I read on the poster that the ticket price included refreshments?
STEVE Yeah.
SANDY Where do guests go for it?
STEVE "Guests?" Oh no. There's no guests invited to this. I'm not having no freeloaders.
SANDY And there's that no frills Saddleworth hospitality too. Let's try it again. Is there any food for visitors who have paid for a ticket?
STEVE Oh aye. Paid up, grub up. It's all laid out on a trestle table in the room at the back.
SANDY What is there?
STEVE Meat and potato pie with red cabbage and mushy peas.
SANDY Is there a vegetarian option?
STEVE Yeah. Red cabbage and mushy peas.
SANDY Isn't that just the accompaniment to the meat and potato pie?
STEVE It is if you're having meat and potato pie. If not, the vegetarian option is ...
BOTH ... red cabbage and mushy peas.
SANDY Some things will never change here.
STEVE A lot has changed here I'll have you know. Nowadays, you can get more frothy coffees on the high street than in Monte-bloody-Carlo. You know, I saw a man sat on a bench near the canal the other day and you'll never guess what he was eating?
SANDY I dread to think.
STEVE Hummus.
SANDY Very cosmopolitan.
STEVE With 'carrot batons.'
SANDY Whatever next?
STEVE I'll tell you what'll be next because it's already here. Couscous. That's what. And "deconstructed burgers" "bespoke salads" "smashed avocado."
SANDY "Foraged mushrooms."
STEVE "Curated Quinoa."
SANDY "Artisan sausage."
STEVE It's the slippery slope to dietary perdition. The comer-inners know nothing of their roots, their heritage. They wouldn't know a sheet of tripe if it slapped them across their chops.

SANDY looks away to stifle a laugh.

STEVE When I was a kid, we called mushy peas 'Oldham Caviar.' I bet there's not many exhibitions where you're served classy wine and caviar now is there?
SANDY There are, as a matter of fact. And is the wine 'classy?'
STEVE Well, you'll appreciate it.
SANDY Why?
STEVE It's French.
SANDY Have you tried it?
STEVE Oh yes.
SANDY And?

STEVE It tastes like you'd want to dip chips in it. But the Oldham Caviar is to die for.
SANDY Well, I can't wait to write my review.
STEVE Review?
SANDY Yes. I told the Editor of one of my newspapers I was briefly coming back here. He asked me to write a piece. A local interest and community angle about the creative scene. I'm calling it, "Discovering the 'art' of rural Greater Manchester."

STEVE stares at her.

STEVE I beg your pardon? Greater what?

She bursts out laughing.

SANDY Sorry, I forgot the delicate sensibilities of you all. I meant the "Historic County Palatine of Yorkshire West Riding." Don't worry officer. I won't disturb the peace again with the use of profane language.
STEVE Good job. "Greater bloody Manchester." Very funny. It's only "Greater" when they want your soddin' money.

They both laugh.

SANDY Well, this has been very interesting. I'm now quite looking forward to writing my article and peppering it with illustrations of the characters that I've met.
STEVE How many have you met?
SANDY Just you.
STEVE In that case, I can't wait not to read it.
SANDY Afraid of what you might read?
STEVE I'm saying nowt. Especially to the press. I'm sure you'll do a good job though, love.
SANDY "Love." Thanks.

She goes to leave

SANDY Oh and, enjoy your meat and potato pie.
STEVE I'm not having any.
SANDY Why not?
STEVE I'm vegetarian. I'd go fill your boots if I were you before all the peas and red cabbage are gone. I mean. Look at them. There's nothing to these arty-farty types. They look like they need either feeding up or burying.
SANDY Do we really?
STEVE Not you though.
SANDY And dare I ask why?
STEVE Because chuck, I'd say, there's something of perfection about you love. "A Yorkshire Rose by any other name."
SANDY "Chuck." And I'm sure Shakespeare didn't include the word 'Yorkshire' in his version.
STEVE We'll forgive him that. With him not being from Yorkshire.
SANDY Well, I've been called some things in my time, but 'Yorkshire Rose' isn't one of them. Your sarcasm knows no bounds.
STEVE Perhaps that wasn't me being sarcastic. Just my well-concealed Saddleworth honesty.
SANDY I'm lost for words.
STEVE I'd have lost a bloody bet on that.

She goes to leave.

SANDY Sandy, by the way.
STEVE Steve, by the way.
SANDY Oh and Steve, stick with the painting. You have promise. You should try a subject more challenging next time. You know. Where you've not had to follow the numbers.
STEVE I thought you didn't appreciate sarcasm?
SANDY I'm home now. Thought I'd blend in with the locals again. "Ta ra chuck."

STEVE You are your mother's daughter you know.
SANDY Then, I'll take that as a compliment. Is she a Yorkshire Rose?
STEVE A Yorkshire cow.

They both smile at each other.

SANDY Bye Steve.
STEVE Bye Sandy. Safe journey back to France.

She exits. He smiles broadly and then looks at his painting.

STEVE By eck. The Doctor only reckons I'm a bloody artist. Chuffin' hell.

LX.

SCENE 2

LX:

The following day, mid-morning.

We are in a large country kitchen of an old house in Saddleworth, ANNE's house.

There is a large kitchen table, centre of the room and around it, four easels facing front with at a stool at each.

There is a stool downstage of the table.

RACHEL *(off stage)* It's only me, Anne. It's Rachel. Door was open.

RACHEL *enters the room and goes straight to one of the easels. She begins to unpack her bag.*

KAREN *(off stage)* Anne. It's Karen. Your door's open you senile old fart.

KAREN *enters the room, talking as she makes her way to another easel.*

KAREN Morning, Rach.

RACHEL Morning Karen. The door was open again.

KAREN I heard. We all heard. All prospective burglars probably heard.

RACHEL Who'd want to burgle here? And for what? All our art class stuff? Has Anne been down yet?

KAREN No.

SHARON *(off stage)* Hi Anne. It's Sharon. Your door's left open.

SHARON *enters the room, talking as she makes her way to another easel.*

SHARON Bloody door open ...

ALL Again.

SHARON Only us this morning?

KAREN Yes. All the others cried off. Didn't want to do this particular class.

RACHEL Why?

KAREN Something on the group chat about them not wanting to paint the subject.

RACHEL Group chats. Never read that rubbish. Not interested in what a group of women are talking about.

KAREN What was that?

RACHEL I'm not interested in what a group of women are saying.

SHARON Say again?

RACHEL I said, I'm not interested in what ... very funny.

SHARON So. What are we painting today?

KAREN A model, apparently.

They turn to her.

RACHEL A what?

KAREN A model. That's what the group chat said.

RACHEL A model? What of?

SHARON Like, a toy model?
KAREN No, stupid. A human model.
RA/SH What?
SHARON Male or female?
KAREN Calm yourselves. She'll have got one of her old blokes to come and pose for us.
RACHEL I won't get my hopes up then. It'll be Maurice from church.
SHARON Please tell me he's not taking his clothes off.
KAREN Sharon, at his age and with his back, he'd struggle to put the bloody things on in the first place.
RACHEL A bloke? We're painting a real man?
SHARON No, we're painting Maurice.
KAREN I reckon it'll be one of her allotment crowd.
SHARON Or one of the husbands who help out at her ladies choir concerts.
RA/KA No!
RACHEL God help us.
KAREN They're very nice but, seriously?
SHARON Oh well. By the end of today, I will probably have honed my skill in painting tweed jackets.
KAREN And brown brogues.
RACHEL And the intricate reflections created from bifocal lenses.

SFX: Doorbell.

SHARON I thought you said no one else was coming?
RACHEL Cue Maurice!
KAREN It'll be Steve. If he's not painting with us, he still calls in of a morning to check in on her. To see if she needs any shopping.
RACHEL No one ever checks if I want any shopping.
SHARON That's because the off-licence isn't open yet love.
RACHEL Cow.

SFX: Doorbell.

KAREN Why doesn't he just come in?
RACHEL Because it's Steve. He stands on occasion outside, waiting to be invited in. Like a bloody vampire.
SHARON *(shouting out)* Come in Steve! The doors open!

STEVE enters, carrying a holdall.

STEVE Morning. I see she's left the front door open.
ALL Again.
KAREN Why don't you just come in, Steve? You know she never locks the door.
STEVE I don't like to. She could be doing something.
SHARON Like what?
STEVE Something private.
R/K/S Private?
RACHEL Steve, what do you think she's going to be up to? A swingers meeting?
KAREN Ooo. Do you think?
SHARON One of my girlfriends was telling me there's a group of them in Delph.
KAREN How have I missed that?
RACHEL Come off it. Everyone who lives in Delph is a swinger.

(a beat, then)

KAREN Eh, hang on. I live there.
RACHEL I rest my case.
STEVE You lot are dreadful.
KAREN You love us really.
RACHEL Does someone need a hug?
STEVE No! Do not start on that nonsense. What is it with you lot and hugging? Just keep your distance.
KAREN *(shouting out)* Group hug!
STEVE NO!
STEVE Has Anne been down yet?
SHARON Not yet. Are you picking up some shopping for her?
STEVE Later on.

RACHEL You're not painting with us then?
STEVE She's asked me to sort a small job for her.
KAREN But we'll miss you!
STEVE Somehow, I think you will easily endure the pain and the loss. Don't worry. I'll be around the house, so you'll see me later.

They cheer. ANNE enters.

ANNE Noisy lot. Morning Steve. All got a brew?
KAREN Not yet. All want one?
R/S/A Yes!
KAREN Sods. You lot never brew up.

(During what follows, she makes the drinks and passes them around)

ANNE Well, we've had lots of emails about the arts exhibition. Really positive feedback. People loved it. And I don't think we could have managed it without you, Steve.

The women all clap.

R/K/S Hurray!
STEVE It was nothing. A poster. Putting tables out. Not as if I'm actually doing owt else, is it?
ANNE Speaking of which, how much time have you got?
STEVE Couple of hours? That should be long enough to do your job. Need to get home after that.
RACHEL You're retired. What are you rushing home to do?
STEVE Oh, you know. Existing. Clock watching. Achieving nothing. You don't appreciate how tiring it is, watching back-to-back 'Homes Under the Hammer' and 'Bargain Hunt' on the box.
KAREN Give over. Is it a secret?
STEVE I don't have secrets from my favourite group of women.
RACHEL How many groups of women do you have?
STEVE Depends which village.
SHARON Then you'll probably have heard about Karen's secret, Steve.
KAREN My what?
SHARON Secret.
KAREN I have not got a secret!
RACHEL Really? Check out her front garden. Pampas Grass Central I've heard.
STEVE You little dark horse.
SHARON Secretary of the Delph Swingers Society.
KAREN You cheeky sods. I'll have you know that it's an urban myth about swingers. I don't grow pampas grass to signal to strangers my "sexual proclivities".
(a beat, then)
KAREN I just put a card in the Co-op window.
ANNE I'm so grateful for you sorting this job for me.
STEVE Give over. Pointless spending money on someone to do a job when I can do it for nothing.
ANNE I know, but still.
STEVE Anne. We've discussed it. I'm happy to help you. Breaks up the tedium of life.
ANNE What would I do without you?
STEVE I'll go get sorted.
R/K/S Bye Steve!
STEVE Bugger off.

STEVE exits.

ANNE He's a love.
SHARON I must say, I'm still surprised that he's stuck it out with painting. With us.
ANNE He needed to settle down after he retired. He's still not adjusted. I think he's still trying to figure life. And himself.
KAREN Has he ever been married?

ANNE He never speaks about personal things so I don't ask. But I have to say, his painting has come on so much. His landscapes are quite exceptional. And you discover a lot about yourself when you paint.

RACHEL Yes. Like where the swingers live.

KAREN Be very careful you.

ANNE Whilst it's just us girls, I just wanted to mention something. Sandy's home.

SHARON Sandy? Back from France?

ANNE Yes. The other day. I wasn't expecting her. Just turned up, like, well

RACHEL A bad penny?

SHARON Or "the prodigal daughter?"

ANNE Neither, I hope. Dropped her bags and then went out. She'd seen the poster for the exhibition as she drove in and said she wanted to drop in and have a look. Something to do with work.

KAREN Is everything OK with her?

ANNE I never know. But I'm sure I will soon. She probably needed some space again. I'm just glad that I'm still her 'go to' for when she does. We know where each other is. And that suits us both. Right. Less chat. Time to paint.

RACHEL What are we doing?

ANNE It was on the group chat. Did you not read it?

RACHEL No. You see, I was really busy and ...

K/S Li-ar!

KAREN She never read it Anne.

SHARON Wasn't interested Anne.

RACHEL Snitches!

ANNE Well, I have a little surprise for you all. Today we are painting ... a life model.

KAREN I told you. Tweed!

SHARON Brown brogues!

RACHEL Bifocals!

ANNE You really are dreadful.

RACHEL Maurice from church, in a thong!

ANNE God forbid!

KAREN No! One of her allotment crowd, hiding his bits behind a cabbage! Freshly plucked!

SHARON I know! Peter, the choir conductor, with his modesty protected by a raffle prize!

RACHEL That'll be exciting.

KAREN Why?

RACHEL Well, they always have such small prizes!

SHARON And large conductors!

RACHEL And he does like to wave his baton!

ANNE Very funny.

RACHEL Come on then Anne, cue Magic Maurice walking in wearing nothing but his tweed posing pouch!

SHARON No, no ... 'The Diggle Chippendales!'

R/K/S Hurrah!

They burst out laughing. KAREN starts them chanting as ANNE shakes her head in despair!

R/K/S Off, off, off, off off ...

The door opens and STEVE enters wearing a dressing gown. The chanting quickly fades out.

STEVE Where do you want me, Anne?

(Stunned silence)

ANNE At the front, sat on the stool please, Steve.

RACHEL Stop messing with us you daft bugger. She's set us up!

KAREN Very funny.

STEVE It isn't funny and I'm not messing.

SHARON You mean, you're the ... he's the ...

R/K/S Model?

ANNE He is indeed.

RACHEL At least he's dressed.
STEVE Not for much longer.

(a beat, then)

R/K/S What?!
SHARON You mean he's, he's ...
KAREN Getting his kit off?
RACHEL All of his kit off?
SHARON When?
STEVE Right now.

STEVE takes his boxer shorts off from under his dressing gown.

KAREN This is a wind-up, right?
STEVE Nope.
RACHEL Well. Art group has suddenly perked up. Let's hope it's not the only thing.
SHARON And, you're OK with this? I mean, you're not embarrassed?
STEVE Nope.
KAREN I think I'm a bit embarrassed.
SHARON I'm not.
KAREN And of all times.
SHARON Why?
KAREN I haven't brought my glasses.
RACHEL You can go home if you like.
KAREN You can bugger off.
ANNE Look girls. Steve offered. When I told him how much a live model would cost us, he said he'd do it.
STEVE It's just a body and this is just a painting.
SHARON Beats Maurice in a tweed thong.
KAREN What difference does it make that we know him? It's like any other painting. Like fruit. I'll think of this as, well, painting a person with a, well,
RACHEL A banana.
SHARON And a couple of satsumas.
KAREN Oh no. Plumbs.
RACHEL Apples.
SHARON Oh yes. Those small juicy ones. You know, what are they called?
KAREN Cox.
STEVE Have you all quite finished?
ANNE Alright girls, enough now. Anyhow. I was thinking more of ... walnuts.
STEVE Don't you bloody start. It's a good job I know you bunch and that I'm not a sensitive type.
ANNE Sorry Steve.
R/K/S Sorry Steve.
RACHEL We're just, you know,
SHARON Breaking the ice.
KAREN And it was a shock.
RACHEL Just a bit. You have to admit.
STEVE Yes. But if you're fine with it, so am I.
R/K/S (together) Oh yes ... absolutely ... no worries ... not embarrassed ... just art ... fine with me ... etc
STEVE And next week, one of you can take a turn.
(Silence)
STEVE That shut them up.
ANNE Touché Steve, touché!
STEVE And at the end of the day, I'm used to this.
KAREN I beg your pardon?
SHARON Used to what?
RACHEL Nudity?
STEVE Absolutely. I'm comfortable with being naked around people. It goes with the job.
KAREN A policeman?
STEVE Secretary of the Delph Swingers Club.

A beat, then he bursts out laughing and they join in.

STEVE Shall we start?
SHARON I'll tell you something Steve, you've got some ...
STEVE Balls?
KAREN Confidence. I can't believe we're doing this; that you're doing this, for us. Thank you.
STEVE It's all fine. It's just art, like I said.

He walks down front and sits on the stool with his back to the audience.

RACHEL Deep breaths girls.
KAREN Deep breaths? I might need gas and air.
SHARON Wishful thinking!
ANNE Oh, hang on, I forgot the props.
KAREN Props? What props?
RACHEL So, we are having some fruit then?
SHARON Or vegetables? Maybe a courgette!

ANNE produces a large pair of headphones and sunglasses,

ANNE I thought Steve could listen to some music and also, wear these to add some interest?
R/K/S Interest?!
RACHEL Are you joking?
SHARON Depends on what he's hanging his headphones from.
ANNE He's wearing them, thank you. On his head. To add another dimension to the composition.
KAREN It'll do that alright.
ANNE Steve. Press the button on them and it'll connect to the wifi. And perhaps, close your eyes. I know you've got the glasses on, but I don't want to make this difficult for you.
R/K/S Difficult for him?
ANNE Well, it might be hard.

SHARON goes to say something.

KAREN Don't you dare!
ANNE Shall we begin? Is your music coming through Steve?
KAREN What's the music?
RACHEL The Stripper?
ANNE Shush! Settle down everyone. Focus. Concentrate. Thank you, Steve.

STEVE settles himself on the stool and then lets his gown fall open. There is a gasp from the four of them.

RACHEL Oh sweet baby Jesus.
SHARON Forget the courgette.
RACHEL This won't work
KAREN Why?

RACHEL turns her canvass from landscape to portrait.

RACHEL That's better. It'll all fit on now.

KAREN turns her thumb horizontal as she looks at STEVE. Then slowly turns it vertical then adds her other thumb!

KAREN I'm not sure I can do this?
ANNE Why?
KAREN I don't think I have enough thumbs.
RACHEL I don't think I have enough paint.
ANNE Then just focus on one small aspect.

SHARON Being?
ANNE The sunglasses?
R/K/S Right.
SHARON And, he definitely can't hear us?
ANNE I don't think so.
KAREN Steve? Can you here us?
RACHEL Eh up, cock?
ANNE Right, stop it. You're not being fair. Come on now, focus.
SHARON Oh, I am. Soooo focussed. At this rate I'm going to be focussed out.
RACHEL I'm seeing double.
SHARON You wish.
KAREN Hold on, what do I say when I get home?
RACHEL The truth. That you've been at your art class.
SHARON With your friends.
KAREN And what do I say we were doing?
ANNE Hanging out?
RACHEL That you did cock all.
ANNE This is very unfair. He can't hear you. Be respectful.
KAREN You're right. Come on girls.
STEVE I hope you lot aren't laughing at me.
ALL No!

The door suddenly opens and SANDY enters, talking as she speaks.

SANDY Hi mum, only me. What are your plans for today? I thought we could ... oh sweet baby Jesus.

She walks into the scene and stops in her tracks and slowly lowers her sunglasses. She stares at STEVE.

ANNE Hi love. You know the girls in the art group.

They all slowly, sheepishly raise a hand simultaneously, waving without speaking.

ANNE We're painting.
SHARON A man.
RACHEL We've made it more interesting by having him, well
KAREN Wear headphones.
SANDY Isn't that ...?
R/K/S Steve.
ANNE You've met him?
SANDY Yes. At the exhibition. But I didn't instantly recognise him with his, his ...
KAREN Headphones on?
SANDY Something like that.
ANNE Nothing untoward is going on love.
R/K/S Nope.
ANNE Just, well
R/K/S Art.
ANNE And he's the same man that was our local ...
R/K/S Policeman.
KAREN Not right now, obviously.
SHARON Obviously.
RACHEL An upstanding person, actually.
KAREN Not right now, obviously.
SHARON Pity.
SANDY Right. Well. I'll, you know. Go and, well, go.

She doesn't and still stares.

ANNE Oh, and Sandy? Before you go? Close your mouth love.

SANDY goes to leave, then

SANDY Right. Fine. Mum?
ANNE Yes love?
SANDY What time is it?
ANNE Just gone 11. Why?
SANDY I think I need a drink.
ANNE Tea?
SANDY Oh no. Having seen ... I think I need ...
RACHEL A stiff one?
ANNE Don't.
SANDY Gin. This needs gin.
SHARON Alcohol? At this time of the day?
SANDY Steady my nerves.
RACHEL Oh, we might need steadyng too.
SHARON Sod it. Count me in.
KAREN I best go along and keep an eye on you steadyng your nerves.
RACHEL And I'll steady you whilst you steady them.
ANNE You can't leave Steve sat like this! And what about the painting?

RACHEL takes out her mobile and takes a picture of STEVE.

RACHEL There. We can work from this.
ANNE I'll show you where the drinks are.
SANDY Large G and Ts all 'round?
ALL Yes!
STEVE What's going on you lot?
ALL Nothing!
KAREN (shouting) And keep those eyes tight shut, Steve. Don't you ruin your concentration or our composition!

They erupt into stifled giggles and quietly sneak out.

SHARON I'm not planning on being composed for much longer.
ALL Ssh!

They exit.

STEVE (calling out) No problem. Need to be gone soon, remember?
ALL (off stage) Fine!
STEVE Girls? Girls?
(Silence)

Steve slowly removes his headphones. He stands, initially with his back to the audience and then, fastens his dressing gown and walks to the door, listening to it. STEVE calls out.

STEVE You bunch of sods.

We hear them burst out laughing off stage.

WOMEN (then, from offstage) Hurray!
STEVE I'm guessing G and Ts? Well, if you can't beat them. And mine's a large one!

He suddenly opens the door and SANDY is stood behind it.

SANDY So it would appear.
STEVE Oh, shit. You. Here. I mean, you didn't ...

SANDY Oh yes. And I saw, Officer, that you were more than capable of taking down your own particulars.

SANDY winks at him, turns on her heels and disappears.

STEVE Chuffin 'ell!

STEVE follows her and exits.

L.X.

ACT 1 SCENE 4 (part)

The kitchen, the following morning, 11.00am.

He sits down. She places her mobile on the table and presses the screen.

SANDY Tuesday 14th at 11am. Speaking with Steve for the article “Discovering the art of rural Greater Manchester.” Sorry. Old habits.

STEVE leans into the mobile phone.

STEVE “This interview is being tape recorded and is being conducted in an interview room in Saddleworth, Yorkshire.” Sorry. Old habits.

SANDY You seem a little tense.

STEVE Is that a question for your article?

SANDY Just an observation.

STEVE Then I guess I am. This isn’t me. I don’t do talking about “me.” The world these days seems full of people who constantly speak about themselves; makers of noise without a purpose. No one listens any longer.

SANDY I’m listening.

STEVE You’re also recording.

SANDY Do you want me to turn it off?

STEVE No, it’s fine. Although, I’m not sure I have anything worth saying or hearing.

SANDY Let me be the judge of that.

(A beat, then)

SANDY OK. Let’s make a start. Question. What brought you to painting?

STEVE Honestly?

SANDY Hopefully.

STEVE I thought I’d stumbled into painting by accident. But it was your mother. So, it was no accident. She’d planned it all along. I know that now. When I retired, she realised I was lost. She also realised that painting could be my saviour. You see, it’s more than a hobby to her. It’s her life, her very being. Part of who and what she is. And I found that infectious, even overwhelming at first.

SANDY Go on.

STEVE I think, if you examined her DNA under a microscope the helix would have strands of Titanium White, Cadmium Red and Ultramarine Blue. Even her personality is a palette. She silently floods a room like a rainbow. She infused me with, something. Wasn’t entirely sure what it was at first. Hard to describe in words. But she gifted me, through painting, energy and purpose. Things I’d lost. Maybe, I’d never had. Some people bring light into your life, others dark. Many make you as grey as they are. For the first time in such a long time after a career of black and white, she showed me what colour felt like. She’s not a “noise maker.” She gives silence a purpose. In the stillness of painting, for the first time, I could hear myself. Breathing and creating. Existing. I could see the world and my place within it. I feel at home with art. More. I feel that I’ve found my home. A home I no longer need to feel resentful of.

(Silence)

The moment is broken as SANDY suddenly stands and walks away, her back to him.

STEVE Have I said something wrong?
SANDY No.
STEVE I apologise if I've ...
SANDY There's nothing to apologise for. I was suddenly deafened by the resonance. For a man not sure if he has anything worth saying or hearing, that was quite profound.
STEVE Not sure I'd go that far. You asked me what I thought and I told you.
SANDY It's just. You've made me remember something.
STEVE Something or someone?
SANDY All of the above. My mother, this place, art. Three things which at one time, made me whole. In the end, they divided me. And now I'm telling all this to someone I've only recently met.
STEVE Memories do that to you. You know what you're problem is?
SANDY This, I've got to hear.
STEVE You've got too much going on in your head. You know what you need?
SANDY What's that?
STEVE Cheese and Onion crisps.
SANDY Crisps? As in crisps?
STEVE Yes. I probably need to explain the ritual of crisps to you. In the right circumstances, they set the world right. Perhaps, that's for another time.
SANDY I can hardly wait. Will every conversation with you end up being so intriguing?
STEVE Will there be more conversations?
SANDY I'm really not sure. But there's definitely something about you. You're ...
STEVE Interesting?
SANDY Different.
STEVE Different good or different bad?
SANDY Not bad. Not bad at all.

(A beat, then)

STEVE But I don't think I answered your first question.
SANDY I'm pretty sure you did. You just gave me an answer that I didn't want to hear. Question two?
STEVE Fire away.
SANDY Why did you never leave here?
STEVE Because the path of least resistance led me back to here. Life only offered me fate. So I took it. One big default position, that's me.
SANDY "I resemble that remark." And are you glad you stayed?
STEVE Is that question 3?
SANDY I'm a journalist, not a genie granting wishes.
STEVE Point taken. I always was. Glad I stayed. But now that it's too late, I no longer know. I think painting allows me to explore 'me' far more than I anticipated. To reach out to beyond, not just here, but somewhere far more; to what might have been. A palette seems to give me substance. A passport to an undiscovered world.
SANDY Again with the profound.

(a beat, then)

SANDY It's never too late to leave.
STEVE It's never too late to return.
SANDY Do you have an answer for everything?

(Silence)

SANDY Well?
(a beat, then)
STEVE Sorry, that was just me trying to not have an answer for everything.
SANDY Smart Alec.
STEVE I think this interview isn't panning out how either of us expected. It's not going to be the article you wanted to write either.
SANDY Don't be too sure. But perhaps it's the conversation I needed to hear. And that you needed to have. Anyhow, you've made me rethink the title.
STEVE Go on.
SANDY I'm leaning towards, "Discovering the Art of Rural ... Yorkshire."
STEVE I knew I liked you.

SANDY laughs.

STEVE I wasn't being funny.
SANDY Meaning?
STEVE Just that Saddleworth honesty. After all, saying what you think can lead you into telling people how you really feel. Even strangers.

(a beat, then)

SANDY Look, Steve ...
STEVE Here they come.
SANDY Here what comes?
STEVE "It's complicated?" "Not right now?" "I need time to think?" "I need space?"
SANDY It's not you.
STEVE Shit. I knew I'd missed one the other day.
SANDY Just stop for a minute.
STEVE Just stop what? Getting to know you?
SANDY It's not that.
STEVE Then what? Scared of being given a reason to stay? Or would you prefer, an excuse to escape?
SANDY We don't know each other.
STEVE Yet.
SANDY My life is in Paris.
STEVE My life's here. Your point?
SANDY I only came here for a break from, from ...
STEVE Life? Or was it from you? Look Sandy. You just wanted an interview. Fine. But in my old job, an interview was a discussion with a purpose. All I'm saying is, let it find it's purpose. Our purpose. Whatever that may be. And with that in mind. I've brought you something.

(Silence)

He stands and collects the package he had brought with him.

SANDY What's this?
STEVE Open it. A gift. For you. A remembrance, it would appear, of a world, of a life you left behind.

SANDY takes the paper off and stares at the picture.

SANDY It's me. It's a sketch of me, in here.
STEVE I drew it last night when I got home. I thought you might like to be reminded of who you really are. And how others see you.
(SANDY is clearly a little overcome, but resists it)
STEVE Look. My art is all I have. So, here you are. A part of it and a part of me. And shall I give you something else for your interview?
SANDY Don't stop now.
STEVE Painting has made me see the value of existing in "the now." It allows me to pause time. To consider the nuance of it. Because now only lasts as long as it takes to say the word. None of us know how many words we have left. But logic and my bathroom mirror tell me I'm running out of them. I'm seeing the world differently Sandy. And unexpectedly, you're now in my view.

SANDY is still staring at the picture.

SANDY People don't talk like that any longer. And you did this for me. People don't do things for me.
STEVE Then maybe, you spend time with the wrong people.
SANDY Maybe. Probably.
STEVE So?
SANDY This is a stunning sketch.
STEVE You're changing the subject.
SANDY No, I don't think I am. I think I really have found the 'Art of Yorkshire.' You are the subject.
You really are my story.
STEVE Just a story?
SANDY Who knows?

(a beat, then)

SANDY I ran away from here and Anne to discover the world when “here” wasn’t enough. Home was suffocating. But, soon I found the world was a place I was drowning in. Art was supposed to bridge the two but it brought me something I came to hate. Notoriety. Constantly running helped me from ever stopping to think about it. But there’s one thing I still have and that life has given to me. A knowledge of art. Good art. And I’m pretty good at recognising it. And I’m looking at it. You have a talent. Genuinely. This article might end up being far more than either of us expect.

(a beat, then)

SANDY And who’d have thought it?

STEVE What’s that?

SANDY That I was right about your art. You clearly don’t need to do it by numbers.

STEVE Cheeky sod. That took me at least ten minutes.

SANDY Joking apart. Anne has guided you very well. Finding a natural talent like yours is the thing of dreams in the art world. Your work, your story, it’s fresh, exciting ... saleable. This interview is a beginning.

STEVE Then, where do I sign?

SANDY Steve, yes, be excited. But equally, tread carefully. I believe you are at the start of, well, god knows. But I have a saying which comes from the bitter pill of my own experiences: “control the genie.” Once it’s out, life changes. And it can’t be put back to how it was. Today’s wishes easily become tomorrow’s nightmares.

STEVE That’s cheery. Don’t ever take up motivational speaking, eh?

SANDY I don’t think that will ever happen.

STEVE Fair enough then. I’m game.

SANDY Any questions?

STEVE Not at the moment chuck.

SANDY Do you know what you will need if you ever go viral in the USA?

STEVE What’s that?

SANDY Subtitles. “Chuck”, “Chuffin hell.” The Americans don’t speak Saddleworth.

STEVE I’ll educate them. Think of it as missionary work. “Bringing art and mushy peas to the masses.”

(a beat, then)

STEVE And as long as you’re around, what have I got to worry about? You will be around?

SANDY I’ll be around.

(a beat, then)

STEVE I have an opinion.

SANDY Another one? I’m all ears.

STEVE Art has already taught me one thing. There’s so much you can achieve if you just go with your instinct and your passion.

SANDY In what way?

STEVE takes the painting from her. Turns off the recording and kisses SANDY.

SANDY I think you’ve just compromised my journalistic integrity.

STEVE Trust me, I’m a policeman.

SANDY Retired.

STEVE Then trust me, I’m an artist.

SANDY Who told you that?

STEVE My doctor.

SANDY Your doctor?

STEVE We’ll see.

They kiss again. SANDY walks to exit but turns back.

SANDY Oh, one last question, purely for the interview. Now that you’ve posed as a life model. Do you still feel uncomfortable taking your clothes off in front of a stranger?

STEVE Yes.

SANDY Pity.

STEVE But we’re not strangers.

SANDY goes to the doorway and turns.

SANDY Chuffin' hell.

She exits and STEVE follows her through the door and closes it.

Audition Pack