

Readings  
from the Book of Cures  
for Madness

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## The smoking room of a day centre

Vinnie  
Fragment  
Peter  
Mrs. Vine  
Snap, an artist  
Eddie

### **Love in the Asylum**

by: Dylan Thomas

□

A stranger has come  
To share my room in the house not right in the head,  
A girl mad as birds

Bolting the night of the door with her arm her plume.  
Strait in the mazed bed  
She deludes the heaven-proof house with entering clouds

Yet she deludes with walking the nightmarish room,  
At large as the dead,  
Or rides the imagined oceans of the male wards.

She has come possessed  
Who admits the delusive light through the bouncing wall,  
Possessed by the skies

She sleeps in the narrow trough yet she walks the dust  
Yet raves at her will  
On the madhouse boards worn thin by my walking tears.

And taken by light in her arms at long and dear last  
I may without fail  
Suffer the first vision that set fire to the stars.

## Scene One

(The day room. A sofa, several armchairs, a coffee table. DSR, a lectern. This is not part of the dayroom, but belongs to Eddie's world, where he speaks to the audience about his journey. Vinnie and Fragment sit across from one another in armchairs. Vinnie wears a German army parka, combats and heavy boots. He has bags beside his chair. Fragment wears cheap jeans, a cotton jumper. Vinnie is rolling a cigarette)

**Vinnie**

You'd want tens for that. Always used tens, me.

**Fragment**

I don't know. I just got it.

**Vinnie**

Well you take it from me. Tens. You can get a bend out of tens. And the third isn't wound. Fuck me, Fragment, you can make it scream when you bend it. And you can bend all of them.

**Fragment**

Not me. She just showed me three chords. Said that was enough for the start. I got two of them sorted, like. Well sorted. And I can move from one to the other. Just strumming. Not very good yet. She said when I'd got the third sorted I'd have a song.

**Vinnie**

Any song you want. Three chords and you got any song you want. Anything else is just twiddling.

**Fragment**

Said she'd get me a bag.

**Vinnie**

Flightcase you need.

**Fragment**

Only want to bring it this far, don't I? Only in here.

**Vinnie**

You going in the quiet room with it?

**Fragment**

I see'd Sheila. Keep the door shut and it's fine.

**Vinnie**

She don't like it though.

**Fragment**

En't done it yet.

**Vinnie**

She don't like sounds. Modern stuff. Like she was about the radio in here.

**Fragment**

Only too loud. She didn't mind it quiet she said.

**Vinnie**

It's an attitude I don't like. Like a lot of things here,

**Fragment**

Only trying for order, en't she?

**Vinnie**

Orders is all we seem to be getting here now.

**Fragment**

I like quiet.

**Vinnie**

You should bring it in and make some noise. Learn to belt it They scream when you belt them.

**Fragment**

She said it wouldn't do that. Nylon. You have to be gentle, she says. I think she's right. I just stroke. Sort of like...**(He mimes stroking his thumb across the guitar strings. Peter enters. He carries an anglepoise lamp with the base missing, and a carrier bag of shopping)** Peter.

**Peter**

Everyone. Two anyway. Are we well? **(Silence)** Fragment. You speak to me. **(Silence)** Won't Vinnie let you? Alright then. I bought this. **(He indicates the lamp)** Is that lovely? It's lovely, Peter. Is it what I wanted? No. I wanted one with a base, but this was cheap and second hand, and it's what I can afford. And how are we? We're not talking to Peter are we? No. Well Peter's talking to us, and Peter will carry on talking whatever. So you've been warned. And trying to extract some response. Indeed he will. Fragment I want to talk tobacco. **(A very long silence)**

**Vinnie**

I got no view.

**Peter**

I didn't ask for your view. I wanted to address Fragment on the issue.

**Fragment**

Tomorrow.

**Peter**

Tomorrow. Which tomorrow? Today's tomorrow, already gone, or tomorrows yet to come? Fragment?

**Fragment**

Listening.

**Peter**

Tomorrow lasts forever.

**Vinnie**

Not much that does.

**Peter**

I want my tobacco today. 200 grammes. Today. Paid yesterday. The day before. Last week. I love tomorrow, Fragment. But I want the tobacco today.

**Fragment**

Trying to make it happen.

**Peter**

Well. Right. ine. End of rant. I have said my piece. On the tobacco issue.

**Vinnie**

Sweet Jesus.

**Fragment**

Trying to make it happen, Peter. Maybe later. See him. Yeah?

**Peter**

I shall be in and out. In this morning. Where's the turn then?

**Vinnie**

She ain't showed. Waiting an hour. Shouldn't do that to people.

**Peter**

Oh.....

**Vinnie**

She shouldn't. There's little posters all over. Ten thirty sharp.

**Peter**

Well we're not always the most punctual individuals....

**Vinnie**

Fragment...what time was you here?

**Fragment**

Early doors. Ten past maybe.

**Vinnie**

And he's let down.

**Peter**

Only eleven.

**Vinnie**

He's let down. And he shouldn't be. It's important. Nor should I be. Or you. You was going?

**Peter**

And still am. She'll be here. They usually come.

**Vinnie**

She shouldn't raise expectations.

**Peter**

She's said a time. And she's within a short space of making it. The time. Plenty of that about. I find. Fragment...plenty of time, yeah?

**Fragment**

Loads.

**Vinnie**

Not the point, is it? She should be regular. What's the one thing they tell you? Here?

**(The door opens. Eddie enters. There is silence whilst he discards his freight of bags, unwraps a heavy coat, lays it carefully on the adjacent chair, and settles comfortably into another chair which is clearly his)**

**Vinnie**

Eddie.

**Peter**

Eddie.

**Fragment**

Alright, mate?

**(Eddie doesn't want this attention; he concentrates upon rooting in his pockets for a tobacco tin, extracting papers and rolling a cigarette)**

**Fragment**

Don't suppose she'll come now. By this time.

**Vinnie**

I said to Sheila. Don't get us all excited. It's not fair.

**Peter**

I notice none of you have the right clothes.

**Vinnie**

Meaning?

**Peter**

The right clothes. For art.

**Fragment**

Only these.

**Vinnie**

How do you know it's that kind of art?

**Peter**

Think.

**Vinnie**

Did. Don't know.

**Peter**

We're moving.

**Vinnie**

And.

**Peter**

To somewhere nice and fresh and new. Where the loonies can lighten up. So there'll be bright pastel colours everywhere. Lots of light. And they'll want a mural.

**Vinnie**  
Why?

**Peter**  
Because they always do. Cheers us up. Bright colours, which are good, and we did it ourselves, which is better. You can have kitten calendars on every wall if you like, but it's always better to have a kitten you painted yourself. I've come ready. **(He waves a polaroid photo)** Trazodone. The calmest of cats. I shall paint his portrait from life.

**Vinnie**  
What is she doesn't want cats?

**Peter**  
Fuck's sake, Vinnie! It doesn't matter. It's a mural. She talks about what we want, then tells us to paint whatever makes us happy. Her job's to find the paint, find the bit of wall that's best, and fit it all in.

**Fragment**  
It's pots.

**Peter**  
What's pots?

**Fragment**  
See Martin shifting his gear out of the room. The one by Claire's office. They got a kiln in there.

**Vinnie**  
He knows.

**Peter**  
I didn't know we had a kiln.

**Vinnie**  
Knows everything. He listens, does Fragment. And he's been about.

**Fragment**  
Been coming a good while. I remember when the college of art closed down. Give us the kiln. But we never used it.

**Peter**  
Lord. Well that's it, isn't it? The death of the kiln. Our last chance to make something lovely. I shall make an ashtray. Big enough for this room. About the size of a lilypond. That should be big enough. With enamelled flowers. Or not. I tried enamelling with that other woman. The one with all the hair. Not a success as I remember it. I started with flowers, and emerged with brightly coloured blurs. Not an exact science, O she said. Possibly not. I shall tidy, if I may. **(Peter begins to tidy the room, sweeping magazines together and emptying ashtrays into the bin. Vinnie and Fragment watch him, shifting about as his tidying comes close. Eddie steps up to the lectern. He is frightened, hesitant. He carries a small piece of paper, from which he reads his script. The others show no awareness of him. Peter takes the bin and exits. Their resumed conversation**

**overlaps Eddie's monologue)**

**Eddie**

In my room. In my room there's a table. Small it is. That's where I keep my book. So it's tidy. So I know where it is. I can see it. Know I've been using it. And. Armchair. Big. Soft. Brown. Doesn't go. But I like it. Sit in it and get wrapped up. Got yellow curtains. So it's bright even when the sun's in. Pull them closed when the sun's bright and the room goes all yellow. And green walls. Got green walls. Leaf green. Painted it myself. **(Eddie sits down)**

**Vinnie**

I heard him again last night. Four hours of Hey Joe. Christ Fragment you should listen to that. Hey Joy, it should be. Like God was an axeman. Anyway. After I listened, I hear him. In the quiet after, I hear Jimi's voice say softly to me, Keep the faith. O

**Fragment**

Wouldn't happen if you took your meds. Up your dose. Or asked for stronger.

**Vinnie**

I do and I don't need no more. Nahh. That's Jimi. Positive, positive. Dark warm voice, and I felt peace all night. Lying in the dark wanting to cry with peace, knowing he's with me. You should learn some Jimi. Get the woman to teach you. Not the wig out stuff, obviously, but you could get hold of a few licks. Few progressions.

**Fragment**

Think I've got a way to go before I can do that. And it don't sound like his guitar do. Spanish, this one.

**Vinnie**

You got to save the pennies, Fragment. Get yourself an axe. A screamer.

**Peter**

**(Entering. He is carrying a flyer)** I think very highly of Sheila, but she takes a real pleasure in withholding information. See this.

**Vinnie**

I got one. All got one.

**Peter**

And it says, Artbeat. (Big letters) Tell the world what you feel. A new voice, a new you. (Small letters) Starts Tuesday, 10.30. O

**Vinnie**

I can read.

**Peter**

So with the passing of the deadline, I poke myself into Sheila's office and ask where the woman is. What woman? O, says she. Why does it have to be a woman? O Because it's nearly always women, O says I, nearly always. O And she went mad. Good five minute rant about making assumptions, all sorts of girl stuff..

**Vinnie**

She do that and I get fucked off. She's in charge of this place. What she want to ask stupid questions like that for? O Course it's female. Blokes got

jobs. Can't get time off coming in and talking to us about new yous. I was on that ward. What's that ward called, Fragment?

**Peter**

I'm with you seldom, Vinnie, love, but you're spot on. It's a girl. But is she having it? Not for a moment. And when I mentioned...mentioned, I say, that you me and Fragment had been hanging about in hope for an hour she went off on one about us not having anything else to do. Christ almighty! I don't think! This. This. (He waves the bag with the lamp) I could be sorting this. I could be dealing with paperwork. I could be making appointments.

**Fragment**

Damascus.

**Vinnie**

That's the one.

**Peter**

You're not really listening, are you?

**Vinnie**

I'm remembering. Always on that fucking ward it was about new yous.

**Peter**

We'll make a new you quick, and make it one that listens.

**Vinnie**

This one's listening now.

**Peter**

And no I don't know what it's about, but you'll enjoy it.Ó She said.

**Fragment**

Enjoy it more if it was happening.

**Peter**

She says it's the same crowd we had two years ago, but not the same woman. I don't remember.

**Vinnie**

We made a mobile.

**Fragment**

I don't remember.

**Vinnie**

You was in.

**Fragment**

Oh.

**Peter**

What's that then?

**Vinnie**

Like a tree made of wire. And we hung things on it.

**Peter**

What sort of things?

**Vinnie**

All sorts. Bits and bobs.

**Peter**

Just anything?

**Vinnie**

Important things. Things that meant something to you. Like Mary hung up her marriage certificate. And that old boy, that Michael. He put his prescriptions in. Old ones. There was all sorts. The woman took them away and when she brought them back they was wrapped in plastic. Perspex. Beautiful. Little hook, and it was there. Bit like a Christmas tree but with peoples' bits on it. And then she hung little pipes so that when the wind took it it made a noise. Beautiful.

**Peter**

Where is it?

**Vinnie**

In the courtyard. We had an opening. Councillor came. Admired it. All over the newspapers.

**Peter**

I didn't see that....

**Vinnie**

Two weeks later the binmen took it.

**Peter**

No...

**Vinnie**

I swear. I swear. Only don't say to Sheila. She was beside herself.

**Peter**

You're winding me up.

**Vinnie**

Fragment. You hear that?

**Fragment**

True. Mary told me. She was heartbroken.

**Peter**

So what did you put in? Something to do with Hendrix. Wasn't it?

**Vinnie**

It was personal.

**Peter**

Hendrix. You're obsessed.

**Vinnie**

I told you it was personal

**Peter**  
Hendrix.

**Vinnie**  
None of your business. So is she coming?

**Peter**  
Next week. Car's broken down.

**Vinnie**  
That's good then, isn't it? All sat here and she's not coming.

**Peter**  
You sit here every morning. You have lunch, you go out, then you come back and sit here until four.

**Vinnie**  
I like to have something to do.

**Peter**  
Well go and find my tobacco. Find the bloke Fragment paid for my tobacco.

**Fragment**  
Pots then. Definite.

**Vinnie**  
Putting two and two, Fragment.

**Fragment**  
If the kiln's coming back.

**Peter**  
A mural. Fired clay. I prefer that to paint. Lasts longer and it'll have a classier look. I'd like a bas-relief. You can do anything you want with clay. Any colour, as well. We could do a history.

**Vinnie**  
Of what?

**Peter**  
This place, of course. Small beginnings, odd person dropping in, all the way to the glory of our new home. Landmarks along the way.

**Fragment**  
We had the bishop come. About four years ago. Had a look round. Said a few words. Shook my hand when he was viewing this room.

**Peter**  
See? That's something.

**Fragment**  
That was all. Only us comes here. And people like the art woman.

**Peter**  
Or personal things. Like that thing you were talking about. We could each do a little chapter. Moments from our own stories. Cheerful things. Little

episodes in our lives when the world seemed a brighter place. Fragment coming out of hospital again. Me off meds. I can see it. A ceramic frieze all down our brightly painted new corridor, clay panels. Like the Stations of the Cross done by the Early Learning Centre....

**(Enter Mrs.Vine. Early sixties. She is dressed in a two-piece suit, carries a handbag and a bag of shopping)**

**Peter**  
Mrs.Vine.....

**Fragment**  
Missus....

**Mrs.Vine**  
Busy, gentlemen?

**Vinnie**  
Only listening to Peter taking the piss, Missus. Sorry. He was making fun. Like always.

**Peter**  
Here for the art, Mrs.Vine?

**Mrs.Vine**  
What art?

**Peter**  
New project. We're slapping some clay about and firing it into something lovely for the new day centre. Very therapeutic. I love the feel of dark red mess between my fingers. Pedal away like mad I do. And squeeze. You should come, love. Plastic pinnie over your twinset; you'd have a marvellous time.

**Mrs.Vine**  
I'm here for Lucy.

**Peter**  
Oh.

**Mrs.Vine**  
I felt I should. A little something. After the time that's past.

**Vinnie**  
Who else is going?

**Mrs. Vine**  
Claire said she'd pop along.

**Vinnie**  
That's only decent.

**Mrs.Vine**  
They'd have asked everyone but there wasn't room.

**Vinnie**  
No.

**Mrs. Vine**

And she didn't know that many....well.

**Vinnie**

She said little enough. Very nice all the same.

**Mrs. Vine**

I don't really want to go myself. It's all a little....

**Peter**

Unsettling.

**Mrs. Vine**

Not quite what's needed. Is it?

**Peter**

No, Mrs.Vine It isn't at all. Well you come along next week. We'll have a bit of a giggle. Should have started this morning but she's broken down....we're doing ceramics. Pottery.

**Mrs. Vine**

I don't.

**Peter**

Well you should. You should have a bit of fun.

**Mrs. Vine**

I prefer to have a talk.

**Peter**

You can talk to us....

**Vinnie**

Talk to me and Fragment, Missus. Never talk to us.

**Mrs. Vine**

I must see Sheila. **(She rises, gathers, exits)**

**Peter**

Well that wasn't an offer to set her heart racing, was it?

**Vinnie**

What wasn't?

**Peter**

You and Fragment'll talk to her. Right. She must really look forward to that.

**Vinnie**

Good company when the company's right.

**Peter**

You or her?

**Vinnie**

The both of us. She's a fine woman. Been through some, though.

**Fragment**

And Lucy this afternoon.

**Peter**

Shame. That's why I asked her. She'll be right down all the rest of the week. All edgy.

**Fragment**

I'm on manoeuvres then. **(He stands)** I shall go and look for the bloke.

**Peter**

Praise God.

Vinnie

Where you going then?

Fragment

Look for the bloke with the baccy. Keep Peter quiet.

Vinnie

You keep the faith, brother.

Fragment

Want anything got?

Vinnie

You back.

Fragment

Bye Eddie. **(Exit)**

Vinnie

You're a stirring piece of shit, Peter.

Peter

And how?

Vinnie

He'll get your baccy. He just takes time. En't going to chin the party, is he? Fragment? Shouldn't put the squeeze on him. He can't take the squeeze.

Peter

I wasn't squeezing.

**Vinnie**

Fragment's not a forceful man. But he does. He does. Takes time.

**Peter**

Takes forever.

**Vinnie**

So how soon you got to get there? And you leave Mrs.Vine alone too. She don't like it.

**Peter**

What?

**Vinnie**

All that stuff. Fragile she is. She don't want too much of it.

**Peter**

Too much what?

**Vinnie**

Too much blather. Specially not today. Cut the blather. She might come on this art thing. But not if there's blather from you. She likes privacy.

**Peter**

Then I shan't trouble her again.

**Vinnie**

Best not. Or I shall cut your fucking throat.

**(Eddie comes to the lectern. He opens his book)**

**Eddie**

There's a crack of light by the door. I leave the landing on at night. Don't like to think there's only dark outside. And I could fall down the tumbling stairs if I went out in an extremity. Get caught by the sudden void. I watch the crack of light. If there's a wind, the crack widens and narrows with the pressure. I like my own warm dark, especially if I've got the light on outside. And I keep the switch to the desk lamp handy by my elbow. For emergencies. Like. I might see something. Hear something. Something I didn't like. Bang. On goes the light. Warm and yellow. Flood the room with light. It's a bit of control.

## Scene Two

**(The dayroom. A week later. Peter, Vinnie, Fragment are sitting in armchair. Eddie sits separately. He is writing in a small, thick ledger. Peter is wearing a smock. Mrs.Vine enters.)**

**Vinnie**

Missus. Glad you could come.

**Mrs.Vine**

Claire was very persuasive. She thought I should enjoy it. And I had time.

**Vinnie**

And you will. You ready for the pottery, Fragment?

**Fragment**

Ahhh.

**Vinnie**

Dries your hands out. If you're a musician, like.

**Fragment**

Safe enough then. Got that third one. Bugger.

**Vinnie**

G7.

**Fragment**

Real stretch, isn't it?

**Vinnie**

Reckon you've cracked it, then. You can do any song you want now. Three chords. Ready for the big time. Hear that, Peter? Fragment's mastered the axe.

**Peter**

Well done.

**(Enter Snap. She has a roll of sugar paper, a packet of markers)**

**Snap**

Hi everyone. Hi. Just let me get sorted.

**Vinnie**

You want a hand?

**Snap**

No. This is it. Travel light for now. Right. Claire said we have the other room but I thought everyone might prefer the smoking room. Yeah? Good.

**Fragment**

How we going to do it in here then?

**Peter**

Planning, planning. Can't do anything till we plan it.

**Snap**

OK. Shall we sit? Maybe a circle? **(There is a shuffling of chairs. They**

**gather round. Mrs.Vine is slightly out of the half circle)** I'm Snap. Snap Fallon. And I'm here for the project. I expect Claire's told you all about it. And you've seen the posters. **(Fragment waves a crumpled flyer)** Similar to that one. But flatter.

**Vinnie**

She didn't tell us much.

**Snap**

Oh.

**Vinnie**

She likes to surprise us.

**Fragment**

We know it's pottery.

**Peter**

Real little detectives we are.

**Snap**

It's not pottery. I don't know where that came from.

**Vinnie**

What is it then?

**Snap**

I shall have to explain .

**Mrs. V**

Would you excuse me?

**Snap**

SorryÉ.of course.

**Peter**

Mrs.V!

Mrs.Vine

JustÉjust that I thought it was pottery.

Snap

You'll enjoy it.

Mrs.Vine

I quite fancied gettingÉstuck in. If you know what I mean.

Snap

Why don't you listen to the next bit? You might want to get stuck in to this. **(Mrs.Vine subsides)** Right. I'm not sure how much you know.

**Fragment**

I don't know nothing Ôcept what I guessed and that's wrong.

**Snap**

I shall start again then. I'm from Artbeat, and we're doing a project to

celebrate the opening of the new centre.

**Peter**

Right there then. Sorry.

**Snap**

The project's funded by the centre and there's some council money. We discussed lots of different ideas for something to put in the new centre.

**Vinnie**

I don't remember that. **(A silence)**

**Snap**

Well. No. You wouldn't. You weren't at the meeting.

**Vinnie**

We got that clear then. What we doing?

**Snap**

Writing.

**Vinnie**

People don't want to look at that.

**Peter**

I do. I love reading stuff people have written.

**Snap**

We thought panels. Panels of poems, stories, thoughts. We've got some money to have them professionally printed. And we could add illustrations. Pictures. Photos maybe.

**Vinnie**

What kind of writing?

**Snap**

That's more or less up to you. Well. Not exactly. Obviously it's intended to reflect the nature why don't we start, and maybe that'll emerge as we go along. OK? **(A murmur of qualified assent. Snap makes eye contact with each until she has their agreement)** Why don't we start with a game. I like games. Always start with a game. **(She is handing out bits of paper)** I have pens if people need them.

**Fragment**

I ain't so good at this.

**Snap**

It's easy. Really. A little game.

**Fragment**

Leaning.

**Vinnie**

Wants something to lean on.

**Snap**

Oh. Have my diary.

**Vinnie**

You got another one?

**Snap**

Who else needs something to lean on? **(Hands raised)** Oh. Sorry. Last place there were desks.

**Peter**

Oh for heaven's sake. Pull the coffee tables together. We're being difficult, aren't we?

**Snap**

No. No. Me not thinking ahead. Right. OK. Everyone sorted? Good. Now. I want you to write down the following. I likeÉ..O

**Vinnie**

Like what?

**Snap**

Right. I likeÉ.anything.Ó You write down a single word. An object. A smell. A person. A place. Anything you want.

**Fragment**

That it?

**Snap**

No. You do it six times.

**Peter**

With a different word each time?

**Snap**

Absolutely. Any word you want, but different every time.

**Fragment**

Christ. Not sure I know that many.

**Peter**

Write down all the words you know thenÉ..

**Vinnie**

You leave him.

**Peter**

He started it.

**Snap**

Let's just try this.

**Mrs.Vine**

Do you mind what sort of words?

**Snap**

Sorry?

**Mrs.Vine**

Well Edo they have to be happy words? Or any words? Is there a theme?

**Snap**

No. No. Whatever you want.

**Mrs.Vine**

It's just that....there are some words.....

**Snap**

I know.

**Mrs.Vine**

You understand.

**Snap**

I do. I think I do.

**Mrs.Vine**

Not the same for everyone, of course.

**Snap**

No.

**Vinnie**

Done.

**Peter**

I think I might be struggling. No. No. Here we are. All sorted.

**Snap**

Right.....**(She has wandered across to Eddie, who sits, motionless)**  
Hello. **(Eddie shows no sign of her presence)** I'm Snap. You probably heard. Are you....? Are you with us?

**Peter**

Snap.....

**Vinnie**

Leave him, girl. Not part of this.

**Snap**

Sorry....

**Vinnie**

That's OK.

**Snap**

For him. I meant to him.

**Vinnie**

He don't mind. Don't mind, do you Eddie?

**Fragment**

Done.

**Snap**

Excellent. You like it?

**Fragment**

Dunno. Not read it yet.

**Vinnie**

Give us a taste, Fragment. First couple of bars and the old grey whistle test.

**Fragment**

I don't like to....

**Snap**

Right. OK. Everyone. Just finish off and we'll see what we've got.

**Vinnie**

We read them out?

**Snap**

That's it.

**Peter**

Ready.

**Mrs.Vine**

I'm not sure this is right.

**Snap**

Stop worrying....OK. Fragment. Is that right?

**Fragment**

It's me. It's what I'm called.

**Snap**

Can you let us have what you've got?

**Fragment**

This isn't right.

**Snap**

It doesn't matter.

**Vinnie**

Go boy. G7.

**Fragment**

I like white

I like kiss

I like Vincent

I like Golden

I like silence

I like...I can't say this. Aranjuez.

**Vinnie**

Did well, Fragment.

**Snap**

That's lovely. I liked golden.

**Fragment**

You only give us a word. One.

**Snap**

Golden is lovely.

**Fragment**

Golden Virginia. Peter knows.

**Peter**

I do.

**Snap**

What was the last thing?

**Fragment**

I can't say it. It's a music. I want to play it one day. Spanish. He does it on the guitar. With an orchestra.

**Snap**

Oh God.....I know that. Yes. Yes. Oh that's lovely. Vinnie. Vincent. Is that right?

**Vinnie**

Could be. You want mine?

**Snap**

I do.

**Vinnie**

Here it comes. You ready?

**Snap**

Read it.

**Vinnie**

I want clouds  
I want steel  
I want acid  
I want leather  
I want Jimi  
I want island

**Peter**

I don't understand....

**Vinnie**

You don't need to.

**Peter**

Well I think I do....

**Vinnie**

You just shut....

**Snap**

That's excellent. There's an image there.

**Vinnie**

Real metal. Not what kids listen to. It's vintage. It's the truth.

**Snap**

No. It's lovely.

**Vinnie**

It's not lovely. It's true.

**Snap**

Not lovely. OK. But it's strong....

**Vinnie**

Oh yes.

**Snap**

And....perhaps. **(She is aiming at Mrs. Vine)**

**Mrs.Vine**

Oh. This is terribly...nice. You'll think it's nice.

**Snap**

I want to hear it.

**Mrs.Vine**

The gentlemen won't want this.

**Vinnie**

No Missus. You say it.

**Snap**

The gentlemen will, if they are gentlemen, listen.

**Vinnie**

Sorry.

**Mrs.Vine**

I want cat  
I want Rachel  
I want Michael  
I want Liberty  
I want truth  
I want yesterday....

**Peter**

That's lovely.

**Snap**

I liked that. I don't know who everyone is.....

**Mrs.Vine**

Oh you don't need to.

**Snap**

No. But it's very personal.....

**Mrs.Vine**

I'm awfully sorry....

**Snap**

You don't need to be. Please. I'd rather it was. It's stronger if it's you. Really. It is. When it's personal it speaks to us. We don't have to know exactly what it means. It's what comes from you that speaks to us. That's what's powerful about it.

**Peter**

Ahem.....

**Snap**

Oh God! Sorry. I hadn't forgotten.....

**Vinnie**

And he wouldn't let you.

**Peter**

Last as always....

**Snap**

No.

**Peter**

Don't mind me.

**Snap**

Please.

**Peter**

Beg.

**Vinnie**

Just read it.

**Snap**

Boys. Please.

**Peter**

I want damask  
I want brightness  
I want postcards  
Want hope  
Want tomorrow  
Want less

**Snap**

Excellent.

**Vinnie**

Where'd the IÓ go?

**Peter**

Does it matter?

**Vinnie**

Woman give you a rule and you broke it.

**Snap**

Well it wasn't a rule as such. More of a guide.

**Vinnie**

He still couldn't follow it.

**Snap**

But it's a pattern. It's still a pattern. All of them are patterns. Well done everybody.

**Fragment**

What we done then?

**Snap**

You've made poems.

**Vinnie**

They're not poems.

**Snap**

They're patterns of words. Poems. That's what I do. I write poems. I make patterns of words.

**Vinnie**

They don't mean anything. These.

**Snap**

They tell us what you want. In a pattern.

**Vinnie**

Oh.

**Fragment**

Reckon that's what Eddie's doing all the time.....

**Snap**

Who's Eddie? **(He nods towards Eddie, who is scribbling)**

**Fragment**

Making patterns. He's got it all wrote down. All of it. In his book. Eddie got all the world's patterns down in his book.

**Vinnie**

Eddie don't miss much.

**Snap**

Will he join us?

**Vinnie**

Probably not.

**Snap**

Not even to show us his book?

**Vinnie**

Never shows it.

**Snap**

That's a shame. Right. Next. I want you think of an object that's important to you. Precious. Can be anything. Doesn't have to be valuable. I want you to write six single words that describe it.

**(Eddie goes to the lectern)**

**Eddie**

The Romans divided the night into seven stages. And they had a name for each one. The first is Crepusculum. I read that. The time of shadows. My best time's evening when the shadows start. Then the light goes grey outside, and the room goes monochrome so I can only see the stains of things, darker patches in the dark. See my bar of light beneath the door and I'm cosy. If they start talking then I don't mind too much. Got the switch to hand. Maybe for when they say something I don't like, maybe for when I've got to note down. Michaela's always first when they come and she soothes. I think she likes evenings and tiredness. Got a soft, breathy voice like having your ear licked, and she praises the day that's been and says hopeful things about tomorrow. She's the angel of shadows, and I don't want her away. I hope for her every night, and the nights she don't come by say half-six in an autumn evening I get stressed and bang go on the lights and the wireless and I might be there half the night reading what I remember of her, trying to bring her to me. And she won't come.

**Snap**

What have we got?

**Vinnie**

Got words. Stacks.

**Peter**

Should only be six.

**Vinnie**

You broke rules. Now I'm doing it.

**Peter**

Snap. love. When do you want us to write about being mad?

**Snap**

**(After a silence)** I wasn't sure I wanted you to do that.

**Vinnie**

You ignore him girl. He's stirring.

**Peter**

Honest question.

**Snap**

Yes. I realise.

**Peter**

I mean....it's either art or therapy, isn't it? You're in a difficult game, aren't you? The money comes because it does us some good, but you've also got to have something to hang on the walls that won't frighten the servants.

And us ranting about being barking mad doesn't make a comfortable decor.

**Vinnie**

You let the woman do her stuff, Peter.

**Peter**

Just trying to find out what's expected.

**Vinnie**

She told us. You go ahead, Miss. What's next?

**Snap**

Well now that the issue's been raised.....

**Vinnie**

There en't an issue. You do what you came for. Got our words. Here's mine.

**Snap**

I was going to move on....save those for now. I said to Claire that I'd go easy on you for the first session. But there's homework.

**Fragment**

Bet that's Claire's idea.

**Vinnie**

She's a hard woman, en't she?

**Snap**

It's my idea. I shouldn't have called it homework. It's a chance to write something a bit longer. In peace and quiet. I want you describe the room where you spend most of your time. Try to be as accurate and detailed as you can. And try not to use words that tell me what you think of it. Don't tell me it's lovely or nice. Just describe it. The shapes. The objects. The colours. The smells.

**Vinnie**

Wouldn't want it too accurate now, Fragment.

**Fragment**

That's just you. I never notice nothing. Claire come round and she said she didn't notice anything.

**Mrs.Vine**

Is that all? I mean - just the room.

**Snap**

Yes. That's it.

**Peter**

You're trying to make this as easy as you can, aren't you?

**Snap**

I'm asking you for something you can all do.

**Peter**

What if we can do more?

**Snap**

Then do it.

**Peter**

I shall write a story. If I may.

**Snap**

Fine. I should like that. Write anything you want. Write a story about an event in your life. But keep it to the event. Don't write everything.

**Vinnie**

That offer open to everyone?

**Snap**

Only if you want to.

**Vinnie**

Game on then.

**Snap**

It's not a contest.

**Vinnie**

Not to you, Miss.

**Eddie**

**(Moving back to the lectern)** Sometimes she doesn't come, comes late perhaps. I wait while the shadows fall, wait ever so long. Only if I wait too long I get caught in darkness, so I have to choose the exact moment. When there's still the dark stains in the grey. Then the lamps go on. Fax, the Romans called it. The hour when the torches are lighted. I get a moment of panic before I switch the lamps on, because if I light them she won't come at all or hardly ever. But I get through the panic because the thought of the darkness is worse, and when the lamps go on there's a warm glow and all the colours come back to life, different. Once she came very late, late on in the evening and I was ready for bed. I think she was angry with me, thought I'd let her down with the light because she prefers the shadows, but even when she's angry her voice is still soft. She's the angel of shadows.....

### **Scene Three**

**(The smoking room. Vinnie and Peter sit apart)**

**Vinnie**

What you done with your lamp?

**Peter**

Don't ask.

**Vinnie**

I just did.

**Peter**

I was so excited. I thought I could just find something heavy and solid to shove it into and there you go. Well I went, and it didn't work.

**Vinnie**

What's at the bottom?

**Peter**

Some sort of threaded bolt.

**Vinnie**

Get yourself a clamp.

**Peter**

I want a base.

**Vinnie**

Get yourself a clamp, you can stick your lamp on anything.

**Peter**

I wouldn't know where to look.

**Vinnie**

Bring it in. I shall know where to look. Stand by your beds.

**(Enter Snap with Mrs. Vine)**

**Snap**

There's nothing to worry about. You don't have to.

**Mrs. Vine**

It does worry me....silly, I know.

**Snap**

It's not silly and you don't have to worry. Just show it to me and no-one else needs to see or hear it if you don't want them to.

**Mrs. Vine**

That's a relief.....

**Vinnie**

Mrs. Vine Miss.

**Snap**

Snap.

**Vinnie**

Snap. Meant to ask.

**Snap**

What? Ask.

**Vinnie**

How come you get to do this?

**Snap**

What?

**Vinnie**

Make us write stuff.

**Snap**

I'm a poet.

**Vinnie**

Should I have heard of you?

**Peter**

Vinnie.....

**Vinnie**

Only asking.

**Snap**

Probably not. Unless you're really keen on poetry. Right....

**Peter**

Bloody rude.

**Snap**

Fair question. Right. What have we got?

**Fragment**

You don't wait about, do you?

**Snap**

What do you mean?

**Fragment**

The others always has a chat. Before, like.

**Vinnie**

He mean they always - people like you - has a bit of banter before the business starts. Before you gets our noses down.

**Snap**

Sorry.

**Vinnie**

No. It's fine. I'm ready to rock. (He flaps a notebook) All ready. Homework all present and correct.

**Snap**

Good. You want to go first?

**Vinnie**

Brace yourselves. **(He makes great play of extracting a glasses case, the glasses, perching them on his nose)** You got a choice, actually.

**Snap**

Right.

**Vinnie**

You can have the room. Or you can have a story about being mad. If that's what you're after. Bearing in mind what Peter said last time.

**Snap**

I'd prefer the room. And maybe we can have the story later.

**Vinnie**

Suit yourself. Here we go. Three flights of stairs. Concrete, and the smell of piss. My front door. Little pane of frosted glass in it. Through to the hall. No windows. Dark. Flush door, plastic handle. Into room. O Taken me a while to get there....

**Snap**

It's fine. Go on.

**Vinnie**

Only a few sticks of furniture. Not much to look at. Book case. Table. Cloth on it but you can't tell because of the clutter. Electric fire in a wood surround. I keep the furniture away from there. Because on the wall there's a framed picture. It's big. A2. Black and white photo of Jimi Hendrix. And in the corner, on its own, on a stand, there's a white Fender Stratocaster. O

**Snap**

Great. Vinnie....is that Jimi Hendrix' guitar?

**Vinnie**

Taking the piss.....

**Snap**

I'm not. Honestly.

**Vinnie**

Any idea what a real guitar of his would be worth? **(She shakes her head)** Tens of thousands. And I should be scared to touch it. No. It's the same make and vintage. My old one.

**Snap**

You still play?

**Vinnie**

**(Holding up his hands)** Can't use them. Arthritis. Been like this since I was mid-thirties.

**Snap**

Sorry.

**Vinnie**

En't your fault, is it? Fragment. Go, son.

**Fragment**  
It's not a story....

**Snap**  
That's all right.

**Fragment**  
It's a version of what we done last week. Only longer.

**Snap**  
Good.

**Fragment**  
Right then.  
I like patterns  
I like blue  
I like red curtains  
And flowers  
I like lino with squares  
and CD's with their covers showing  
I like white plates with a red edge  
I like white candles....  
...I stopped there.

**Snap**  
That's a pity.

**Fragment**  
I ran out of things I liked.

**Vinnie**  
Mention the guitar. You got a new guitar.

**Fragment**  
I forgot that.

**Vinnie**  
You should have put that in.

**Fragment**  
Sorry.

**Snap**  
You can put it in. Gosh. Musicians everywhere.

**Fragment**  
Not really. Only starting.

**Vinnie**  
I'm bringing him on. But I can't show him anything.

**Fragment**  
Showed me the Strat. Beautiful. You pick it up and it hums in your hand.

**Vinnie**  
Keep it polished. And tuned. Always in tune.

**Snap**

That's lovely. Mrs. Vine....

**Mrs. Vine**

Oh...

**Snap**

No. No....I wondered. Could I read yours?

**Mrs. Vine**

You said....

**Snap**

Now that we've heard Fragment. I shall read it for you if you want.

**Mrs. Vine**

Very well....

**Snap**

(Taking the piece of paper) I think I might be a flower person. Everything flowers. Curtains, carpets, throws, even the wallpaper. I love a carpet of flowers. A riot of colour and the room suffused with the scent of pot pourri. O

**Mrs. Vine**

It's probably a bit much....

**Peter**

Sounds lovely. I feel at home already.

**Snap**

Shhhh.... My room revolves around two things. I have a Roberts radio on the small table beside my armchair. An original. Some thirty years old, still working perfectly. My rock. The wireless. I begin the day with the Radio 4 theme, and finish with the shipping forecast. I like to go to bed all warm and think of the little ships out there in the dark with the weather battering them. It's selfish, but it makes me feel secure. O Mrs. Vine That's lovely! Then there's the mantelpiece. The photographs. Every inch of the mantelpiece is covered in them. Wooden frames, plastic frames, silver frames. Everyone important is there. Rachel at five. At twelve. She's smiling. David and Rachel together at the Alhambra in Granada. David at his graduation. With long hair, and he looks silly. Michael in the ridiculous trousers he wore playing golf. Our wedding. I can't remember ever trying on the dress before the day.... O

**Peter**

Snap.....Snap. **(Mrs. Vine is crying.)**

**Snap**

Sorry.

**Peter**

I think we should get some tea....**(All except Mrs. Vine and Eddie stand and exit)**

**Eddie**

**(Mrs. Vine is crying)** Concupium. The hour of sleep. Most nights I don't. I

wait for the full dark and the lamps, wait....time ticks past, and the hours crawl. Some nights I battle sleep so I shall be awake for the coming of the host. Most nights, nothing and no-one comes. I leave the lights on and fall asleep. Duvet on the couch nights, I call them. Wake up in the small hours, cold. Done a lot of those. But there's precious nights when the rapture comes. Starts with the room full - I mean a room fully lit. No shadows, no fooling. Not something you'd imagine. It's like all the friends you ever had came round to see you. Most nights....most nights I don't see them. Or I just catch a glimpse. And the soft touch of wings. Brush my face with their feathers as they crowd round me. They don't speak but the air's full of noises. I don't know how long they stay but when they've gone I sit there and the tears roll down my face.....

## **Scene Four**

**(The smoking room. Vinnie and Peter face Snap across the room. Eddie sits apart, scribbling)**

**Snap**  
I said sorry.

**Vinnie**  
You shouldn't push.

**Snap**  
I didn't think I had.

**Vinnie**  
Well she was pushed. Pushed hard.,

**Peter**  
She's sensitive.

**Vinnie**  
She's a miserable woman. She has to stay away from things.

**Snap**  
I didn't force her to write about anything.

**Peter**  
You don't need to. She will if she's encouraged to. Get her on her own in here and she'll have you in tears in no time. And herself.

**Snap**  
I see.

**Peter**  
You probably don't.

**Snap**  
OK. I don't. Where's Fragment?

**Vinnie**  
Not well.

**Snap**  
Sorry to hear that.

**Vinnie**  
Said he couldn't face it this time. Maybe next week.

**Snap**  
Is this hard work? Writing.

**Peter**  
For some. You haven't done this before, have you?

**Snap**  
Not like this.

**Peter**

You mean with people like us?

**Snap**

OK. If you want to put it like that. No I haven't.

**Peter**

There's things you can talk about and things you can't.

**Vinnie**

I don't care. Not bothered, me. Wrote my story.

**Snap**

Can we hear it?

**Vinnie**

I don't like all this miserable stuff. Ask Ôem round here and they all come out with stuff about being miserable. Or telling you how happy they are now. Only difference being if they had their meds or not. So this is just a story. **(He goes through the business with his glasses again)** 1972. I'm in this blues band in Manchester. Few gigs, not much interest. So I meet this girl at a gig, and I really fancy her. Probably because she wouldn't. Few beers after, and she complained about my smoking. The day after we're going down to the West Country to do a bit of a festival. I asked her to come, and she said she would but she didn't like me to smoke. Didn't like to taste it on me. So I said I wouldn't. Three of us in the back of the Transit with all the gear. Six hour, seven hour drive. Got this girl in my arms all the way down. I could smell her perfume, got the warm weight of her against me, got her hand in mine. And because she's a nice girl, and because there's this other bloke in there, I can't get started. And I am on fire. Desperate for her, and desperate for a fag. All the way down to Devon. Well we get there, and it's busy setting up, and she hangs about, and occasionally I get to give her a quick cuddle, and then we're on. Played a blinder. Early evening, hot night. All I'm thinking of while I'm on stage is to get finished and to get her somewhere quiet. And I know that she hasn't got a sleeping bag and I have. So we do the set and they give us one encore, and I scuttle off to find her. Nowhere. It's only a small do, few hundred people. No sign of her. We had this roadie. Badger. Dunno why. Badger sees me wandering about and he knows what I'm after and he says she's gone off with some bloke on a bike. And for a second, the world fell in on me. Beautiful summer evening, everyone having a good time facing one way, and me looking at the crowd and the world's gone dark. So I wandered about a bit, away from the crowd, and I sit down with this other lot. Leant against a tree. Someone give me a cigarette, and that's cheered me up, because I'm desperate. A Kent. Never seen one before. Like a Marlborough, I'd say. And the bloke that give me the cigarette's got a guitar. Acoustic. Martin. And he's playing a blues tune. Wicked. I lit up, and took a deep, deep drag. My head was spinning. It was the best cigarette I have ever smoked. A good smoke, good sounds, summer evening. Perfection. O

**Snap**

That's tremendous.

**Peter**

I didn't know you had sensitive side.

**Snap**

I honestly thought it would be about drugs.

**Vinnie**

Well cigarettes is drugs. Not proper drugs, like. You can't write about proper drugs. You do drugs, you don't write about them.

**Snap**

You did those as well?

**Peter**

You his probation officer as well?

**Snap**

I didn't mean it like that.

**Vinnie**

No. I done all sorts of shit. All did. I mean, mostly you were pissed. Dunno why, but I had a big thing for Pernod.

**Peter**

Pernod! Why fucking Pernod?

**Vinnie**

I liked the way it went cloudy with water. And the taste.

**Snap**

But it's aniseed....

**Vinnie**

Don't ask. I couldn't have the smell near me now. Though I don't touch alcohol. We drank Pernod by the pint. And everyone took all sorts of shit. That's where all this started. (He indicates the room) Acid and mushrooms.

**Snap**

You know that?

**Vinnie**

There's loads in this state started with taking stuff. There's a few new ones now. That girl. What's she called? The teacher one that was here a while?

**Peter**

Emma.

**Vinnie**

That Emma. Hers started with E's. Nothing wrong with her till she started on those.

**Snap**

What's wrong with you? Fuck. That was direct. But I don't know. You have arthritic hands. What else?

**Vinnie**

Don't show, does it?

**Snap**

No.

**Vinnie**

I'm a paranoid schizophrenic, madam.

**Snap**

Oh.

**Vinnie**

You don't know what that is, do you?

**Snap**

No.

**Peter**

I was down as that for a while.

**Snap**

What happened?

**Peter**

Saw a different psychiatrist. New diagnosis. I've been all sorts, me.

**Vinnie**

He don't take it serious. At the moment. I see him when he's on a downer, thought. Change his tune. Can't get to see them quick enough.

**Peter**

Manic depression. Nought to sixty in under five seconds. Astonishing. You going to put Vinnie's story on the wall?

**Snap**

Why not?

**Peter**

Hardly fits the brief, does it? Doesn't push our understanding of mental illness that much further on, does it? And it's sweet but not exactly cheerful. Should have put some flowers in, Vinnie love.

**Vinnie**

Fuck off.

**Snap**

I didn't expect it to be about flowers. What have you written, Peter?

**Peter**

A story.

**Snap**

Will you read it?

**Peter**

If you like. **(He has a notebook)** I remember the nightlight. A teddy bear which used to glow in the dark of my bedroom. It didn't seem to illuminate very much, it was just a glowing thing on the bedside table. I think I was quite scared of it; it never gave comfort or anything, and I never really got on with teddy bears. But it was a constant. One night I was lying there, half asleep, and someone came in to the room. My bed didn't face the door, but I saw the flood of light and felt heavy footsteps cross the room. Then I felt a

body sit on the bed, right next to me. My father. He sat close. I could smell whisky. I felt the clothes being pulled back, then he put his hand on my back, and slid it down inside my pajamas. That was all. He rested his hand on my bottom for a long while - it seemed like a long while. Then he took his hand away, pulled the bedclothes back up, and got up and went out of the room. And he came every night. Every night he did the same thing. I don't remember anything else happening. For two years, almost every night he came and touched me. Then he stopped. O **(He has stopped; the others wait)** That's it.

**Vinnie**

En't much of a story.

**Snap**

It's fine. Fine. What happened?

**Peter**

Nothing happened. Nothing happened in Vinnie's story either. But the story happened.

**Snap**

Did it have - an effect?

**Peter**

Is it what made me what I am?

**Snap**

Yes.

**Peter**

I don't know.

**Vinnie**

You made that up.

**Peter**

Fuck off.

**Vinnie**

You did. I know you. I hear you all the time.

**Snap**

Vinnie!

**Vinnie**

He makes stuff up. Tells lies. Don't matter most of the time. We all knows him. But you don't. You don't know him. So it's not fair.

**Snap**

Peter....

**Peter**

What?

**Snap**

Did you make it up?

**Peter**

You asked me to write a story.

**Snap**

I know I did.

**Peter**

You didn't say anything about true stories.

**Vinnie**

Mine was true.

**Snap**

It doesn't matter!

**Peter**

Clearly it does.

**Snap**

No....

**Peter**

It's something to put on the fucking wall, isn't it? Whether it's true or not!

**Snap**

It's fine. I like it.

**Peter**

So why does it have to be true?

**Snap**

It doesn't....

**Peter**

Well you've got it. Do what you fucking like with it. **(He gathers his things and exit)**

**Vinnie**

Don't take on.

**Snap**

I've upset him.

**Vinnie**

You haven't. Gets like that. Here. **(He offers her a cigarette. She takes it)**

**Snap**

I don't smoke. I gave up. **(She lights it)**

**Eddie**

Nox intempesta. The hour of stillness. On a rapture night I sit and listen to the silence when they've gone. An awesome silence. Nothing stirs. If they don't come I sit and listen to my heartbeat. When I was a small boy I used to lie awake and wait for my heart to stop. I thought every beat was the last. That's when it's really bad. The silent hours in the dead heart of the night. The other voices start sometimes, but I know how to make them go away. Sometimes I talk to myself, to hear my own voice. But it sounds wrong in all the silence.

**Snap**

Where's Eddie gone?

**Vinnie**

Dunno. He goes sometimes.

**Snap**

I'd like to see his book.

**Vinnie**

He won't let you. Don't let anyone see his book.

**Eddie**

Galicinium. The cock's crow. At five o'clock they got a news on World Service. Half past they play a tune and it's the proper radio. Like the day starts. But no-one's stirring. Only me in the half-dark, making some tea so's I can settle down by the window. **(Eddie puts down his book and leaves)**

**Snap**

What's it about?

**Vinnie**

Don't rightly know. Him, I suppose. Don't know him much. We was on Damascus together for a bit. He had a bit of depression. Quite bad in fact. He hears stuff. You here next week? **(She nods)** I got to see Fragment. He got his third chord. Strength to strength that boy. I got him a few books of tunes.

**Snap**

I shall be here.

**Vinnie**

See you then.

**Snap**

Bye. **(Vinnie goes. Eddie's book lies on his chair. Snap goes to it, hesitates, picks it up. She reads)** Conticinium. Silence. Aurora. The dawn. I switch off once I got the headlines. No point listening to any more. Her downstairs goes out at seven twenty. I hear the door. Then there's the post at eight. Slap of envelopes on the mat. That's the last noise until evening. It's the silence of the days that's the worst. Filling the silent days. It isn't the voices or the things I see, it's the silence of the days and filling them.....

**Ends.**

