



OSTRICH BOYS PAGE 73 ACTIVITY 2: EXTRACT 1 (PAGES 57-61)

The trouble with Cleethorpes station is that the platforms are so open, there's nowhere to hide. You can see the beach, and what we call the sea. I've never understood why people would want to come here on holiday – there must be half a million more exciting places. But at this time of year, and on sunny Saturday mornings, there are plenty of trippers wandering around. I kept thinking people were looking at us. It was difficult to go unnoticed standing next to Kenny in his horrible orange T-shirt – it was the orangest T-shirt I'd ever seen. No wonder Sim was wearing sunglasses.

There were about a dozen others waiting on the platform with us; I didn't recognize any of them, so hoped they didn't recognize us. We felt guilty knowing Ross was tucked deep inside my rucksack and conspicuous with our tickets to Scotland. Cleethorpes is also a dead-end: the trains only come this far. They don't even turn around, just go back out towards Grimsby the same way they came in. And the train coming in was late, so we knew it would be even later going out again. We shuffled our feet, fidgeted, squirmed, stared along the track- willing it to hurry up.

When my mobile rang Kenny and Sim leaped away from me quicker than if they'd heard the sudden tick of a bomb. I didn't want to even touch it at first – guessing who was on the other end. I had thought it was funny to pick the noisiest, nastiest ringtone I could. But I wasn't laughing now. And some of the other waiting passengers turned to glance at us. Waiting was boring; they were quite happy to be nosy. I killed the call without even taking the phone out of my pocket, just fumbling for the button. Then, reluctantly, oh so reluctantly, I took it out to read the caller display.

Sim stayed at a safe distance when he asked, 'Your mum?'

I nodded.

He swore. Then went pale when his mobile burst out ringing too. He hurried to shut it up. Looking a little pale he said, 'My dad. They must have got him out of bed – he was on night shift last night.'

'Please God don't let them call my mum,' Kenny prayed. 'Please, God. Please, God...'

He shook his fist at the sunny blue sky when his mobile finally went off.

We switched our phones to silent. Maybe they'd be easier to ignore. But the way they buzzed and vibrated was like trying to hold angry pins and needles in the palm of your hand.

So now we knew: Ross's parents had been quick to contact ours. In my mind's eye I got a flash of the look on my mum's face as she gripped the receiver of our phone in the living room at home. I stopped the call but she kept ringing back. There was no way I was going to answer, yet I didn't quite dare to switch the phone off either. Ignoring my mum's call was dangerous enough; switching it off altogether was close to mutiny.

I decided to let her shout at the voicemail instead of me and was grateful when at last it kicked in. My phone went still. I grinned at Kenny and Sim in relief. But only for a second or two. Mum wasn't going to be ignored quite so easily.

Kenny was dancing on the spot, juggling his mobile like it was on fire.

'Don't answer it,' Sim told him. 'Don't you dare!'

'But...my mum...she'll go mad if I don't.'

'That's exactly *why* you don't.' Sim waved his own phone high, and with an exaggerated devil-may-care grin held down the power button, blanking the screen and killing its furious buzz. He shrugged and pushed the phone deep into his jeans pocket. 'My dad's gonna kick my arse. But I reckon it'll be worth an arse-kicking.'

Kenny didn't seem so sure. 'You know my mum. You know what she's like. I'm telling you: she'll *kill* me.'

‘She’s just going to tell you to come home, right? D’you want to go home? You’re not flaking out on us already, are you?’

Right then I think Kenny was tempted to say ‘yes’, but he knew Sim and I would never give up so easily. So he shook his head. ‘No, course not. Just...’ He danced a bit more, pointing at his phone.

Sim snatched it from him. ‘It’s got an “off” button too, you know.’

‘Maybe, yeah. But my mum hasn’t.’

Sim ignored him, turning the phone off. Then he looked at me.

I nodded, forced the image of my mum’s angry face out of my mind and pressed down hard on the power button. I felt a little shaky with my defiance but didn’t let it show. I held the phone up to Sim to prove the screen was blank.

‘Right,’ he said. ‘Now this is the deal. We don’t turn them on again until we get home, okay? We don’t need them. It’s not like anything’s going to happen to the three of us together, is it? We’ll take whatever crap they throw at us when we get home. But by then it’ll be too late to stop us, because it’s already going to be done, isn’t it?’ He seemed pleased with his logic.

Kenny and I didn’t get a chance to argue because that was when the train decided to arrive. We hurried on board. And I felt that bubbling, nervy defiance I had inside become a definite rush. I realized I’d never been this rebellious before. My parents would stop me in an instant if they could, and they’d certainly punish me now that they couldn’t. But here I was, doing it anyway. Doing it with my friends.

Who’d have guessed it could feel so good?

OSTRICH BOYS PAGE 74 ACTIVITY 2: EXTRACT 2 (PAGE 25)

Blake and Kenny grab the map and Blake's rucksack – Race off the train – Race up the platform with **Sim** –

Blake Wrong way!

Blake, Kenny and Sim run in the opposite direction.

They see a Guard with a whistle.

Blake, Sim and Kenny Wait. Wait!

The Guard waves for them to hurry.

Blake, Kenny and Sim leap on board.

Kenny slams the door – it catches the map.

Kenny opens the door again.

The whistle blows –

Kenny slams the door.

The train starts to move.

Blake, Kenny and Sim collapse, exhausted.

Sim You're sure this is the train?

They panic.

OSTRICH BOYS PAGE 75 ACTIVITY 3 (PAGES 16–17)

Kenny But nobody knows.

Kayleigh You're kidnapping him?

Blake Well –

Sim It's not really kidnapping.

Kenny He'd have to be alive for that.

Kenny It was Blake's idea.

Sim We've got – We had this friend. Ross.

Kenny And he's always wanted to go to this place in Scotland.

Sim Ross.

Blake To be Ross in Ross.

Kat Ross in Ross. That's cool.

Kenny He even ran away once. He told me.

Sim He told all of us. He wasn't running away.

Kenny He told me first.

Blake It's not a competition, Kenny.

Kenny I knew him in primary.

Sim I knew him in primary too.

Hayley We don't care who's winner of your best friend's best friend award boys. What are you doing here?

Sim He only got as far as Leeds.

Blake So we decided.

Kenny We're taking Ross to Ross. Like he always wanted.

Blake Like one of his stories.

Kenny Ross wrote adventure stories.

Sim And even though he changed the names we know the characters were based on us.

Kat Cool.

Kenny But nobody knows.

Kayleigh You're kidnapping him?

Blake Well –

Sim It's not really kidnapping.

Kenny He'd have to be alive for that.

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OSTRICH BOYS PAGE 78 ACTIVITY 4: EXTRACT 1: PARENTS (PAGE 28)

Blake I can't stop thinking about what Ross's mum and dad are gonna say.

Sim Don't care. If they'd given Ross a proper funeral we wouldn't have had to do this. I want the people who made the last days and weeks of his life miserable to know about it.

Blake Even his mum and dad?

Hugh *is with Ross.*

Sim His dad, all arty farty with his writing and his masterpiece novel. I reckon the only reason he encouraged Ross's writing is because he couldn't hack it himself.

Penny *joins Hugh and Ross.*

Penny Ross. Why do we have to come and see your teacher?

Hugh It's probably nothing.

Penny What have you done to upset this Mrs Fowler?

Hugh He's a kid. These things don't matter.

Penny Yes they do!

Sim What was it Ross said? 'My mum speaks eight different languages but she still doesn't understand a word I say.'

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OSTRICH BOYS PAGE 78 ACTIVITY 4: EXTRACT 2: SEAN MUNRO (PAGE 29)

Blake That night Munro and his goons beat Ross up.

Sim Yeah. What?

Blake Nothing. It's just it all started when Ross let you copy his homework and didn't grass you up to Fowler.

Sim So? Jesus, Blake, is this *CSI*? Munro beat the crap out of him. He shouldn't have been allowed inside the funeral. End of story. He's the guilty one.

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OSTRICH BOYS PAGE 78 ACTIVITY 4: EXTRACT 4: CAROLINE (PAGE 50)

Blake *puts his head in his hands.*

When he looks up –

Caroline *is there holding a notebook.*

*She waits for a **Crowd** to gather, then begins to read from the notebook.*

Caroline ‘She wanted an angel. One who radiates and brings love –’

*Some of the **Crowd** laugh.*

Nina and **Ross** *enter. **Caroline** sees them.*

Caroline ‘And takes all with a smile, a joke, a fall in cosy losers’ love –’

*The **Crowd** laughs more. **Ross** tries to snatch the poems from **Caroline**.*

Crowd ‘Cosy losers’ love –’ ‘She wanted an angel –’

The laughter echoes.

Ross *rips up the notebook and . . .*

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OSTRICH BOYS PAGE 78 ACTIVITY 4: EXTRACT 5: TEACHER (PAGE 50-1)

Antonia *faces Hugh and Penny. She presents them with two pieces of paper.*

Antonia Clearly one of the students copied their work.

Ross *sighs.*

Penny Ross –

Antonia Are you telling us it wasn't you, young man?

Ross *is silent.*

Antonia The school takes a very strong line on this kind of dishonesty.

Hugh Yes, we –

Antonia But in addition. In addition, the vandalism.

Hugh and Penny *look at Ross.*

Antonia The bicycle shed covered in offensive and personally abusive graffiti, taking a great deal of time and trouble to repair –

Ross *snorts.*

Penny Ross!

Antonia This is exactly the attitude –

Penny Ross, apologise to Mrs Fowler.

Hugh Ross!

Antonia You see.

Hugh Are you trying to say it wasn't you? Just tell us who it was and –

Ross *kicks out in a rage.*

Antonia *looks at Hugh and Penny – see what I mean.*

Antonia I'll leave you to talk to your son.

Antonia *goes.*

Penny Oh Ross.

Hugh We're really disappointed.

Ross *storms away from his parents and . . .*

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OSTRICH BOYS PAGE 79 ACTIVITY 4: EXTRACT 6: SEAN MUNRO (PAGE 51-2)

In the park, Sean and three Goons see Ross.

Sean Look who it is.

Ross *tries to walk away but the Goons block his path.*

Sean I hear they're asking you about my work on the bike sheds. Teachers always say you'll be fine if you tell the truth, don't they? Yeah? Well you won't be. Just to make that absolutely clear –

Sean *nods to the Goons, who pile in on Ross.*

And . . .

Ross, *bloody-faced, turns to Blake.*

Blake *holds out a towel.*

Blake *watches Ross clean the blood from his face.*

Ross *turns to Blake, smiling.*

Ross *walks away from Blake, still smiling.*

Blake's *phone rings and rings and rings.*

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OSTRICH BOYS PAGE 79 ACTIVITY 4: EXTRACT 7: SEAN MUNRO (PAGE 57-8)

Blake You keep blaming everyone.

Sim I want the people who made the last days of his life miserable to suffer.

Blake gives a little laugh.

Sim You want a smack?

Blake You said Munro and his goons beat up Ross in the park.

Sim So? If there's one person who should have been chucked out of Ross's funeral it's Munro.

Blake How did you know it was in the park? I said to Ross that night – let's call Sim. And he just looked away. Were you there?

—

Blake You were in the park and you did nothing. You watched them beat Ross up. Sim. It only happened because he let you copy his homework and didn't grass you up.

Sim *sinks to the ground and buries his head.*

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OSTRICH BOYS PAGE 80-1 ACTIVITY 4: (PAGE 5)

Ross's *body lies dead.*

And . . .

The black-clad figures, faces uncovered now, file into the crematorium where he lies.

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OSTRICH BOYS PAGE 80 ACTIVITY 4: (PAGE 5-6)

*Chief mourners are **Hugh and Penny**, Ross's parents, with **Caroline**, his sister.*

*As the badly chosen funeral music plays, **Ross's** family receive condolences from, among others – **Antonia Fowler**, Ross's History teacher, **Sean Munro**, one of **Ross's** classmates, and **Nina**, Ross's girlfriend.*

[We'll meet them in more detail later.]

Once the crowd has gathered –

*An invisible force glides **Ross's** body away, out of sight.*

The vulgar music reaches a tasteless climax.

Flames roar.

And . . .

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OSTRICH BOYS PAGE 82 ACTIVITY 5: (NOVEL PAGES 33-48)

Ross's urn was sitting on the table in front of me. And as soon as his sister turned her back I was supposed to steal it. And him.

At the moment she wouldn't even let go of it. She kept touching the smooth sides, rubbing it like Aladdin rubbed his lamp – as if she was hoping Ross might leap out, same as the genie always did.

It was old-fashioned looking, squat but curvy, marble-white with swirls of grey. I couldn't stop staring at it. And weird thoughts kept popping into my head. Like, did he fill it to the brim? He was a skinny fifteen-year-old; if he's been a twenty-eight-stone fat knacker, would he spill over? Would it matter if I shook him up? Could you tell the difference between arm ash and leg ash? Freaky thoughts – but I couldn't stop myself thinking them.

Yet, in a way, they were the easier thoughts too. The truth of Ross being gone for ever, of my best friend being nothing more than ash in a jar, still felt impossible and bizarre.

'I don't like thinking this is really my little brother,' Caroline said, as if reading my mind. 'I want to pretend it's more like something he's left behind to remember him by.'

I nodded and mumbled something close to an agreement, and felt thankful she was willing to talk over my awkwardness. I'd been scared she might think it was kind of sick, kind of creepy for me to turn up and ask if I could see the urn. But now I reckoned she couldn't stop wanting to look at it either. It was horribly magnetic that way.

She brushed her hair out of her eyes, pulling it back into a hasty ponytail. She had a wide forehead, a thin, straight nose and a point to her chin. She was a slice-of-birthday-cake prettiness. But it was crumbling away beneath the tears.

It was a glorious June Saturday morning and the sun streamed into the kitchen through the window over her shoulder, making her untidy hair glow in a hazy mess. It was hot out there, and it was close and stuffy in here. My T-shirt was sticking to me. I'd been in this kitchen a hundred times at least, enough that I never noticed what stood on the shelves any more. But it didn't feel like the same kitchen today. All the doors and windows were shut tight. The whole house felt claustrophobic. The sadness that filled it was like a suffocating pillow over my face.

'Yesterday made it true,' she said. 'I think up until the funeral yesterday I could pretend it wasn't real. Or was just some kind of stupid mistake.'

It was the way I'd felt too. The funeral had made the past week solid, undeniable fact. Which was yet another reason for hating the crappy funeral.

She dug in her pocket for a tissue, then turned away from me as she blew her nose and wiped at her tears. Seeing her cry made me wonder if I should admit to her what we were planning. I liked her. If there were going to be sides, maybe she should be given the chance to choose ours.

Not that I was going to say anything because Sim's face appeared at the window behind her. He was wearing sunglasses, peering inside. He waved to get my attention and tried to mouth something at me but I couldn't read his lips. Then Kenny poked his head up next to him and the two of them started waving, signalling, desperate to tell me something. Caroline was digging for a second tissue. I glared at Kenny and Sim, hoping they'd get the message to 'get lost' before she saw them.

'I honestly thought I would have run out of tears by now,' she said. Half smiling, but not meaning it. 'Do you think you'll ever get used to it?'

I was too busy trying to figure out what Kenny and Sim were telling me.

Caroline looked up. 'Blake?'

I nodded, ducking my head so she'd follow my eyes back to Ross on the table instead of to the window over her shoulder. 'Yeah. Sorry, I'm, you know... What did you say?'

'It doesn't feel right without him,' she said, reaching out to touch the urn again. 'The house feels empty; I don't know if I'll ever get used to him not being here. It must feel weird for you too, because you were his best friend. School must be strange without him. Do you think you'll ever get used to him not being there?'

I stared at the urn. 'No.' I shook my head hard enough to stop any slippery tears of my own from escaping. 'No.'

'Because you were always together, weren't you? You and Sim, and that other boy.'

'Kenny,' I told her. 'Kenny England.'

She nodded and I looked back over her shoulder at the two of them waving and miming at me. Kenny was wearing a bright orange T-shirt that was far too big for him. He was drowning in it, the baggy sleeves coming down to his elbows. He kept shaking his arm at me, flapping the sleeve like a wing.

Caroline nodded. 'Ross was lucky to have friends like you.'

I met her eyes, wanting to know if she really meant that. She'd always called him 'Little Brother', never Ross. She was seventeen and I'd expected us to be just stupid kids to her, she only put up with us because she had to, because we were her brother's friends. And, of course, Kenny, Sim and I fancied her – much to Ross's amusement (and sometimes annoyance). She was on the county netball team and we went to watch her play every chance we got. We didn't give a damn who won. She just looked fantastic in her PE kit.

I remembered Ross once saying, 'I bet I wouldn't have any friends at all if my sister was a dog.' And with hindsight, maybe one of us should have told him it wasn't true.

She didn't look much like my stunning netball fantasy today. She was wearing a shapeless jumper and stretched, scruffy jogger's pants. Her eyes were red-rimmed and puffy. Her sadness made her ugly. And I knew she's had a big bust-up with Ross last week, and she might just be feeling guilty about that. But she didn't seem to be feeling sorry for herself. The way she talked was the way I felt. It made me feel kind of protective towards her – I wanted to cure her of her grief like Kenny, Sim and I were going to cure ourselves of ours.

She gripped the urn in both hands. 'You know, I can remember so many things about him now. Little things, I mean. Things that happened on holidays or just funny things he said that I swear I'd never have remembered in a million years if he hadn't...if he was still... It's like, if he was still here, I wouldn't need to remember them. Maybe wouldn't have even wanted to.' She gave that half-smile, which was nothing like a smile really. She was fighting the tears again. 'Weird, isn't it?'

I nodded and decided I really was going to tell her about our plan. I even opened my mouth to spill everything, but we heard keys rattling in the front door, and then the door open.

'My dad's home,' she said, getting up. 'He'll want to see how Mum is. But you can stay – he'll be really please you're here.'

I'd hoped I could avoid having to see Ross's mum or dad. 'I thought your dad was at work.'

'No, he's been at the police station. They called really early this morning.' It was lucky she was already halfway out the door because then she couldn't see the sudden look of horror on my face.

All I could think was either Munro Senior or Mr Fowler had called the police about the graffiti. And of course the first people the police would contact about it would be Mr and Mrs Fell. It was their son's name sprayed over other people's property and all. I waited in the kitchen, expecting Mr Fell to come charging through to accuse me. I racked my brain for a convincing alibi. But I heard footsteps going upstairs and guessed he wanted to see Mrs Fell first. But did that mean he didn't know what we'd done last night? Or was he just asking her opinion on what to do with us? She'd always been the strict one.

Kenny and Sim were still at the kitchen window. I had to lean over the sink to reach it and open it a crack.

‘What’re you fanning about at?’ Sim hissed. ‘We’ve just seen his dad’s car. He’ll be home any minute.’

‘He’s *already* home,’ I hissed back.

‘So hurry up then.’ He pointed at Ross on the table. ‘Come on, pass him through.’

‘And he’s been to the police station.’

Sim recoiled. ‘What?’ he pushed his sunglasses up on top of his head, where they were held fast by his Velcro hair. ‘What for?’

‘Don’t know. But I bet I can guess.’

Kenny was at Sim’s shoulder. ‘That’s it, then. We shouldn’t do it. Let’s just go. Leave Ross. I’m telling you: we’ll just get in even more trouble.’

I shushed him. I could hear footfalls in the room above. ‘No,’ I whispered. ‘We’ve got to do this. But maybe we can get Caroline to help.’

Sim wasn’t happy. ‘Really bad idea, Blake.’

‘She’s really cut up,’ I said ‘I can tell just by the way she’s talking how bad she feels. I mean, genuinely. And I reckon she’d probably want to come with us.’

‘Yeah? Well, I’m not doing it if she is,’ Kenny said, almost climbing in through the window to make his point. ‘So she can’t. Tell her she can’t. *I’ll* tell her if you want.’

Sim shoved him out the way, warning him with a glare to keep his voice down. ‘What about what she did to him last week? Remember? In front of everybody at school? She wasn’t all that cut-up taking the piss out of him then, was she?’

I shrugged. ‘Yeah, but...’

‘If she wasn’t his sister she’d be just as bad as Fowler and Munro.’

Kenny got his nose in again. ‘After what she did, I bet she’s half the reason Nina dumped him.’

I knew that wasn’t true, but I also knew I couldn’t explain why not either.

‘She won’t understand,’ Sim said. ‘She was there at the funeral same as everyone else, and she didn’t do anything, did she? No one’s gonna do anything because no one else knew him like we did. So no one else is gonna understand.’

I nodded. Maybe he was right.

He slipped his sunglasses back down into place. ‘Look, if we don’t go now, we get done for the graffiti. And then we’re never gonna be able to do this. I’ve already told my mum I’m staying at Kenny’s tonight, and he’d said he’s staying at mine – we’re already doing it. Just get Ross and let’s go.’

‘Yeah, Blake,’ Kenny said. ‘Come on, it’s nearly ten.’ He pushed his watch in my face. ‘The train goes at half-past.’

I checked over my shoulder again. ‘Okay, but how am I supposed to sneak him out now his dad’s here?’

‘Just pass him through.’

‘I’ve got to get out too, don’t forget. I can’t still be here when they come back and see Ross isn’t.’

‘Climb through with him.’ Sim stepped back to give me room.

‘Can you fit?’ Kenny asked. Which wasn’t particularly fair.

‘Of course I can *fit*,’ I hissed. ‘But I’ll make a hell of a lot of noise doing it.’ I pointed out the crockery and glasses in and around the sink that I was bound to smash trying to climb over. ‘I’m gonna have to leg it out the front door while they’re upstairs. Wait for me at the corner, okay?’ I turned back to the table to grab Ross.

But Kenny stopped me. ‘Do we need all of him? Can’t you just scoop some out? No one’s going to notice if there’s just a scoopful missing.’

Sim and I weren’t impressed.

‘Are you sick?’ Sim asked. ‘And what’re we meant to carry a “scoopful” in anyway?’

Kenny shrugged. ‘There must be some Tupperware somewhere. He had a lunch box, didn’t he?’

‘D’you really think he’d want bits of him here, bits of him there?’ I remembered my earlier thoughts, wondered if we’d be able to tell whether we’d taken some arm or leg or whatever. ‘No way am I gonna get into this much trouble just so we can end up with his big toe!’

Kenny was ready to argue again, but I heard footsteps coming back down the stairs and waved at him to shut the hell up. I swore, realizing it was too late to pass the urn through without getting trapped in here. ‘Now what am I meant to do?’ I said.

They both shrugged.

I swore again. ‘Just meet me on the corner in five minutes, okay? And get ready to run.’

They nodded. They ducked their heads quicker than if someone was aiming a gun at them. Caroline had walked back into the kitchen, with Mr Fell behind her.

Yesterday at the funeral was the first time I’d seen him since Ross’s accident, and there had been a weird little bit of me worried he might resent me for still being alive when his son was dead. I’d just avoided him. And now I was scared he’s hate me for spraying Ross’s name on people’s doors and cars. But he smiled at me, came over and shook my hand, pumped it hard. ‘Blake, good to see you. Wonderful of you to come round.’

I didn’t know how to reply. So I said something stupid. ‘I, er, just opened the window a bit. I wanted to let some air in.’ Anything to distract him from the guilty flush on my face.

‘It’s a bit stuffy, isn’t it?’ he said. ‘Push it all the way up if you want. We seem to keep barricading ourselves in at the moment.’

I opened the window as high as it would go, and leaned over far enough to see Kenny and Sim scrambling away through the flowerbed on their hands and knees, dragging our rucksacks through the dry earth behind them. When I turned back Caroline was sitting at the table, holding Ross in both hands again. Mr Fell was pouring himself a glass of orange juice. He offered me some but I shook my head. If he was going to get mad at me about our graffiti he was going an odd way about it. I guessed he didn’t know what we’d done – not yet anyway. I couldn’t work out why he’s been to see the police.

He was a tidily shabby man, always wearing what appeared to be the same baggy cords and old-fashioned cardigan with patches on the elbows – although Ross had told us he had a wardrobe full of them. He has a thick but neat, greying beard and half-moon glasses on a chain around his neck. Like Ross, he wanted to be a writer, and I supposed dressing like one was halfway towards actually being one. He was the opposite of Ross’s mum, who never seemed to be able to switch off her bossy-lecturer mode, even when at home. She spoke to everybody like they ‘could try harder’. And this last year Ross had somehow got it into his head that he was adopted. No way did he think he had any of the same genes as either of his parents. He’d made a long, long list of all his differences. The shared ambition with his dad being the *only* similarity.

‘Penny says to say hello,’ Mr Fell told me, nodding his head at the bedroom above, where Mrs Fell had confined herself since Ross’s death. Caroline had already told me that the funeral yesterday was the only time her mum had left the house this past week. ‘She’s sorry she can’t get up to see you. Doctor’s got her on so many pills she’s beginning to rattle. She’s still...still struggling, unfortunately.’

He was talking to me in a particularly adult manner, as if confiding in me. I nodded in what I hoped looked like an understanding way and wondered how on earth I was going to prise my best friend out of his daughter’s grasp.

‘I’m glad you came round, Blake. I’ve been meaning to get in touch because there’s something I’d like to ask you.’ He’d been staring at his orange juice but now he looked straight at me. There was a worry in his eyes that I didn’t understand. ‘I’m not quite sure how to put this...but, how did Ross seem to you? In the days running up to the accident, I mean?’

I was confused. I looked from him to Caroline. She kept her eyes on Ross.

‘Okay. I think.’

Mr Fell nodded, scratched his nose. ‘Anything bothering him? That you know of? Anything in particular that he might have told you?’

I thought about Mr Fowler, Munro, Nina. Caroline was quite defiant in her not looking at me and I also thought about the way she’d taunted her brother, embarrassing him in front of most of the school last week.

I said, ‘Just school and stuff, I suppose.’

Mr Fell kept nodding and even gave me a brief smile. ‘The usual things you lot have to put up with?’

‘Well, yeah. I suppose so.’ I wasn’t lying, I just wasn’t going into detail.

‘He didn’t seem...anxious?’

I couldn’t see where this was leading. ‘I don’t think so.’

Mr Fell was silent. He drank his orange juice in one gulp and sighed.

‘Can I ask why?’

He looked up at me again, surprised. ‘Yes, of course. Of course you can.’ But it took him a while before he answered. He stared hard at Ross’s urn – like it was a crossword, sudoku and Rubik’s cube all rolled into one.

‘The police, well, they needed to talk to me about something – something that hadn’t really crossed my mind.’ His eyes flicked between his daughter and me. ‘Anybody’s mind, for that matter. But it has very much upset us – Caroline, Penny and myself.’ It still took him an effort to spit it out. ‘It’s the driver of the car that hit Ross who’s brought the matter up. He seems to think Ross may have purposely caused the accident. That he intended to ride into the car. On purpose.’

I still didn’t get it. I waited for him to explain.

He lifted his glass to drink again, but there was only the tiniest of drops left. It took an age for it to dribbled along the inside of the glass to his open mouth. All I could do was sit there and watch. At last he put the glass down on the counter.

‘He was your friend, Blake. I’m sure he talked about lots of things with you that he’d never dream of telling his mum and me. I’d very much appreciate your honesty. Do you think Ross could have taken his own life?’

OSTRICH BOYS PAGE 87 ACTIVITY 7: (PAGE 20)

Penny Can I ask you something, Blake?

Blake *freezes, guilty.*

Sean Blake, have you come round to steal our son's ashes as part of some insane plan to take them to Scotland?

Penny I don't know how to put this. Before the – in the days leading up to the accident. How did Ross seem?

Excerpted from the play *Ostrich Boys* by Carl Miller, copyright © 2011 Carl Miller. First published by Methuen Drama in 2011.

OSTRICH BOYS PAGE 88-9 ACTIVITY 7: COMMENTS FROM CARL MILLER

Comments from Carl Miller

Novels and plays work in different ways. One of the pleasures of Keith Gray's book, for example, is the way it takes you into the thoughts of Blake, who tells the story. In this adaptation I decided not to have him as a narrator figure. Because I was writing for a large, mixed cast, I instead used a chorus of figures from Ross and the boys' lives to take us inside Blake's head at times.

In a book, and often in a film, we can focus everything down to one character's point of view. On stage, however, it feels different when you have more than one person on stage. An effective scene is usually a kind of struggle (physical, emotional or mental) between two or more characters, each of whom needs to 'live' equally on stage.

In adapting this point in the book, I knew that Blake's 'want' – to take the urn – would drive the action. I also tried to make sure the other people in the scene, Penny and Caroline, had clear, strong 'wants', so that the actors playing those parts would have something to work with. So Penny, Ross's mum, is trying to find out if Blake can explain why Ross might have killed himself. And Caroline, Ross's sister, is trying to stop Penny from doing that, maybe because she finds her mum embarrassing, maybe because she doesn't want Blake to know that there is a belief that Ross killed himself, maybe because she doesn't want to hear that herself... The audience doesn't need to know what is driving these characters at this point, but the actors do.

Sometimes practical considerations shape your decisions as an adapter. For cost reasons, playwrights are often encouraged to write for a small number of actors, reducing the 'cast' of a novel. I was lucky in this case to be writing for a large cast, so didn't have that pressure. What I did know, however, is that I would be writing for female and male actors, so looked for opportunities to include more roles for women (as it seemed vital that the central quartet of Ross, Blake, Kenny and Sim should remain boys). For that reason, I switched Ross's parents, keeping his father offstage in bed and bringing his mother in to talk to Blake in this scene. I've been very lucky that Keith Gray has been so supportive of me tinkering with his book – but my concern has always been to keep to the 'spirit' of his novel, even where I've altered things.

Alongside the comic tension in the scene (Blake's desperate attempt to steal the urn) I wanted a sense of how Ross's death has affected Caroline and Penny. Often actors can communicate emotion very strongly by having something to struggle against, so what Penny says to Blake, for example, isn't a direct statement of her feelings, like 'I feel tormented with grief and guilt'. But something of that comes through, I think.

And part of the brilliance of the book is the way it explores how Blake and the boys can't engage with that emotion (or even maybe notice it) in other people because they are so caught up in their own plans. So even in this tiny scene, Blake is being an 'ostrich boy'. Each scene is a microcosm of the whole play.

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OSTRICH BOYS PAGE 91 ACTIVITY 8: Comments from Keith Gray

Comments from Keith Gray

Ostrich Boys the novel is written as a first-person narrative, from Blake's point-of-view. So, as the novelist, I'm trying to climb inside Blake – into his shoes, under his skin, to look out through his eyes. Maybe even to connect up to his brain. (Have you ever seen that science experiment where the scientist uses a lemon to light up a bulb? Wires are attached to the bulb with the bare ends stuck into the lemon's juicy pulp. Think of my lemon-brain trying to power Blake's bulb.)

I'm not Blake and Blake's not me. The reader should only ever be concerned with Blake's thoughts and actions and the lemon-headed novelist should be hidden, ignored. If the reader, while reading, keeps thinking about the writer, then that writer has failed.

It would also be unrealistic, wouldn't it? I'm (currently) a 38-year-old adult while Blake is (and always will be) a 15-year-old teenager. If I were to put my 38-year-old point-of-view, belief system or moral code into the mind and mouth of a 15-year-old it would be dishonest, cheating.

I suppose what I'm saying is, for the reader, the writer should be the very last thing to worry about. And as the author I'm happy (and doing my utmost) to be totally forgotten about.

When it comes to adaptation I can take an even bigger step back. It's a little like the game of Chinese Whispers. The playwright passes my story along to another audience, repeating the good bits, leaving out what's not needed for their interpretation. Personally, I've found the process fascinating. The most intriguing of all is the way the point-of-view has shifted. In the novel Blake is the sole narrator, no matter how unreliable he turns out to be – which is a crucial part of the story. In the play, however, the focus has widened to include all of the characters. Or perhaps it could be claimed that Ross has finally become the central character in his own story, and in a way we're watching events through his eyes.

OSTRICH BOYS PAGE 92-3, ACTIVITY 9

Our best friend was ash in a jar. Ross was dead. Kenny, Sim and I were learning to live with it.

And this was all Sim's idea. It was just that Kenny and I weren't convinced exactly how great an idea it was.

We'd had to wait for it to get dark, which at this time of year wasn't until after half-ten. We'd given it until eleven. Now we were crouched whispering in the shadow of some scraggy fir trees in the front garden of the history teacher's house. We had branches jabbing at us, needles in our hair and down the backs of our collars. But no matter how much we shuffled and hunkered, the shadow wasn't quite big enough. We were still wearing our dark funeral clothes, and that helped. The problem was Kenny, who kept squirming, shoving bits of me and Sim out into the glare of the streetlights. All it would take was one eagle eye to look our way and we'd be seen for sure. A car sped by and we ducked our heads. It wasn't just the warm June night making me sweat.

'This is for Ross, remember,' Sim, whispered. 'We can't flake out now – we all agreed. You agreed too, Kenny. Don't say you didn't.'

Excerpted from the novel *Ostrich Boys* by Keith Gray, first published in 2008 by Definitions, an imprint of Random House Children's Books © 2008 Keith Gray.

Kenny Bacon's looking for a striking visual image.

Bacon Youth. I need to rebrand.

Kenny So I said what about a picture of someone young, jumping. Blow it up, a big poster people see from the road.

Bacon Smarter than he looks. Not that that's hard. So I'm offering a free go.

Kenny And twenty quid. You said. You know you'll earn that back with one extra customer. You said twenty quid.

Bacon Chill, Sir Alan. If Bacon says it, Bacon pays it.

Blake and Sim take Kenny aside.

Sim I heard a bloke in America died doing that, Kenny. The cord snapped. He was all messed up and had to crap through a tube or something.

Kenny Um –

Sim We're not letting you do this.

Kenny Um –

Blake It's great that you're prepared to sacrifice yourself for Ross but –

Bacon So? What's he say?

Bacon is looking at Blake.

Blake What?

Kenny Um. The image. Bacon reckons it will be better if it's someone um –

Bacon Bit of a geek, bit of a flab, bit of a loser. You.

Blake Me?

Bacon A comedy image. Bacon's Blackpool Bungee is all about fun. No offence.

Blake Piss off.

Bacon You get a free jump and twenty quid.

Blake picks up the rucksack.

Bacon Thirty quid.

Blake starts to go.

Bacon Fifty. Jump, have your picture taken and I'll give you fifty bloody quid. Deal or no deal?

Kenny and Sim look at **Blake**.

Hayley You didn't?

Kat No!

Kayleigh looks at **Blake**.

And . . .

Bacon gives **Blake** a form to sign. *They are high above Blackpool beach.*

Bacon adjusts the bungee cord around **Blake**.

Bacon Need the cord adjusted right – precision job, dude. If that crazy bungee's too long you're gonna smash face first into the beach. Sign here.

Sara Thirty types of risk.

Tariq Thirty injuries

Alisha Afflictions.

Kevin Traumas .

Bacon To say you won't sue.

Sara No matter how –

Tia Neck whipped

Tariq Shoulder wrenched

Yasmin Leg yanked

Kevin Knee twisted

Sara Bowel slackened

Tariq Spine snapped

Ash Back cracked

Kevin Or heart attacked.

Blake OK.

Blake looks down.

Bacon A hundred and sixty metres. You're as high as the tower, dude. But you'll fall it in less than five seconds.

Sara and Others One.

Two-

Three.

Four.

Five.

Bacon It's only one in a thousand jumpers ends up with permanent injury.

Tia Neck.

Tariq Shoulder.

Yasmin Leg.

Kevin Knee.

Sara Bowel.

Tariq Spine.

Ash Back.

Kevin Heart.

Bacon I'll just see how many we've had so far this month. Oh, nine hundred and ninety-nine.

Bacon *laughs and points to where a camera is rigged.*

Bacon The more scared you look, the better the photo. After three?

Blake *looks down, shivers and closes his eyes.*

Ross *watches.*

Bacon Three.

Blake *wobbles.*

Bacon Two –

Blake *jumps.*

OSTRICH BOYS PAGE 94 ACTIVITY 10: EXTRACT 2 (PAGES 7–8)

Train.

[Most of this part takes place on trains.]

Hayley and Kayleigh have taken possession of a train table and surrounded themselves with freshly filled shopping bags.

The train rattles along.

[Much of this part requires highly skilled 'on a train' acting, from gentle bobbing to full-on staggering from side to side.]

Blake, Kenny and Sim enter the carriage, staggering from side to side. **Blake** carries an unwieldy rucksack, **Kenny** an unwieldy map.

Kenny freezes.

Blake and Sim look at **Kenny** with dread – what has he spotted?

Kenny Girls!

Blake and Sim notice **Hayley and Kayleigh**.

Hayley and Kayleigh are oblivious, showing each other items of clothing they've just bought.

Sim Come on Kenny.

Kenny But – girls.

Kenny rolls his eyes, nods his head and coughs in **Hayley and Kayleigh's** direction.

Sim Lovely, Kenny. Subtle.

Kenny What do you call a bunch of birds, Sim?

Sim A flock.

Kenny Yeah, but what do you call a flock of gorgeous birds?

Sim Kenny-dodgers. I'll do the talking.

Blake Sim!

Sim When did you lose interest in chatting up girls, Blake?

Blake We've got to –

Sim They might know how to get there.

Kenny And they're *gorgeous*.

Sim Cover your T-shirt, Kenny, it'll scare them off.

Excerpted from the play *Ostrich Boys* by Carl Miller, copyright © 2011 Carl Miller. First published by Methuen Drama in 2011.

Inspector Shopping till you drop eh, girls?

Hayley and Kayleigh smile.

Blake gives his ticket, **Sim** gives his and **Kenny's**.

Inspector You've come a long way, lads.

Blake, Kenny and Sim try to smile innocently but just look incredibly guilty.

Blake, Hayley, Kayleigh, Kenny and Sim watch until the **Inspector** disappears.

Blake, Kenny and Sim sigh with relief.

Hayley OK.

Kat squeezes out from behind the bags under the table.

Kat beams. **Sim** turns on **Kenny**.

Sim And the hassle we had getting you a ticket! I told you to hide but you're more chicken shit than a girl. Don't. I'm too ashamed to even listen.

Blake spreads out the map. He checks out of the window.

Blake We're in Scotland. At last.

Kenny I like them.

Sim Stop drooling. You'll get the map soggy.

Blake We'll have to walk from here to here. It's a hell of a way.

Kenny There's three now. One each.

Blake Leave it.

Kenny Who d'you like best?

Sim Blake's right, Kenny, we've more important stuff to do. But – her.

Sim indicates **Hayley**.

Kenny No way! I fancied her first.

Sim Tough.

Kenny That's not fair. Tell him, Blake.

Blake Kenny, get a grip.

Excerpted from the play *Ostrich Boys* by Carl Miller, copyright © 2011 Carl Miller. First published by Methuen Drama in 2011.

Hayley, Kayleigh and Kat stop at the entrance to a field.

Blake, Kenny and Sim look with distaste.

Kat It's this field where the fair used to come. Then they built the new houses where we live and my dad tarted this petition. 'Hello, I'm angry from Dumfries and Galloway and I hate fun. Please ban the fair.' So it stopped.

Kayleigh But they left the whirligig behind.

Kenny How long's it been here?

Hayley Six years. Seven?

Sim Imagine when the fair blokes left. 'Helter skelter?' 'Check.' 'Big Wheel?' 'Check.' 'Octopus ride?' – 'Oh shit! We forgot the octopus ride.'

Blake considers the forlorn structure.

Blake The day the fair died.

Sim You sound like one of Ross's poems.

Kat It's still fun. Get in.

Kat and Kenny squeeze into one of the whirligig seats.

Kayleigh Hold tight ladies and gentlemen! Keep your hands and feet inside at all times.

Kayleigh starts to run round the whirligig while **Kat** pretends it's her and **Kenny** who are going round – the girls have played this many times before.

Kayleigh Scream if you want to go faster, Kat.

Kat screams.

Kenny screams.

Kayleigh grabs **Hayley** as she passes. **Sim** holds on to **Hayley**.

Hayley, Kayleigh and Sim run round while **Kat** and **Kenny** pretend they're holding on for their lives.

Blake watches, clutching the rucksack.

Kayleigh Join in!

Sim Blake, join in.

Blake joins in.

Sim trips and rolls (quite spectacularly) off at a tangent.

Hayley and Kayleigh collapse. Laughter and exhaustion.

Kat Let's have a midnight picnic! I've always wanted to do that. I can get stuff from my house.

Kenny Wait! I'll help you.

Kat rushes off. **Kenny** catches up with her and they go off together, giggling.

Hayley I'll help her.

Sim And I'll help you, fair lady.

Hayley No you won't.

Sim holds out his hand to **Hayley**. She takes it, but without giving anything away.

Hayley and Sim go off, leaving **Blake and Kayleigh**.

—

Excerpted from the play *Ostrich Boys* by Carl Miller, copyright © 2011 Carl Miller. First published by Methuen Drama in 2011.

Blake, Kenny and Sim consider the derelict building.

Sim It only seems spooky cos it's empty.

Kenny You first then.

Sim *peers in.*

Sim Grass and leaves.

Kenny Plastic bags, fag packets, lager cans.

Blake Somebody's had a fire.

Sim *kicks at something. The noise echoes.*

Kenny There could be somebody inside.

Sim Some *body*. All messed up and gross and rotting.

Blake Ghosts don't start fires and drink lager.

Sim Go and have a look, Kenny.

Sim *tries to push Kenny into the house.*

Kenny Get Blake!

Sim and Kenny *try to push Blake into the house.*

Blake and Kenny *turn on Sim.*

Sim Touch me and die.

The three fight to push each other inside –

And all collapse through into the darkness of the derelict house.

Blake *switches on a torch.*

The wind whistles spookily.

Blake Storm's coming back.

Kenny Wish we had a tent.

Sim Like Ross says, wish in one hand, shit in the other and see which fills up first.

Kenny This is an adventure, right. Ross would have loved it.

–

Blake, Kenny and Ross *set out places to sleep without talking.*

Kenny I need a pee.

Sim Do it outside.

Kenny I'll get soaked.

–

Kenny I'm going to have to go.

Blake and Sim So go.

Kenny Can I have the torch?

Blake and Sim No.

Kenny One of you come with me then.

Sim Christ on a bike, Kenny. Scared of the headless ghost?

Kenny If you're not scared, let me have the torch. Or come with me.

Blake Just go further inside – far enough so we don't hear the splash or see the trickle. No need to go out in the storm.

Kenny I'll still need the torch.

Blake and Sim *sigh and get up.*

Excerpted from the play *Ostrich Boys* by Carl Miller, copyright © 2011 Carl Miller. First published by Methuen Drama in 2011.

OSTRICH BOYS PAGE 95 ACTIVITY 10: EXTRACT 6 (PAGE 54–6)

Kayleigh *presents two scooters.*

Kayleigh That's my scooter, that's my brother's. But there's only two helmets.

Sim They're softer in the head than me.

Blake and Kenny *take the helmets.*

Kayleigh We don't want to get you in trouble.

Kat Here. It's my number.

Kat *writes her number on Kenny's arm.*

Hayley Follow signs for Kirkcudbright first, then Dalbeattie. It's a longer route but there'll be less people. And then it'll be easy.

Hayley, Kat and Kayleigh *help Blake, Kenny and Sim onto the scooters.*

Kenny *holds on to Sim.*

Kat You're not lying to me are you? I'm not helping you to kill yourselves?

Kenny No. Promise.

Kayleigh We'd do the same for each other.

Hayley We're not that crazy.

Kat I think it's romantic.

Blake, Kenny and Sim *drive off. Music pounds as they tear up the open road.*

They increase in confidence as they get used to the scooters.

The morning sun shines and the three friends fill with the exhilaration of the final lap.

Blake *stops.*

Blake Need to check the map.

Kenny and Sim *stop.*

Kenny Can I drive next, Sim. Let me?

But Sim points into the distance.

Sim Police.

Kenny Oh no.

Sim Gap in the hedge, that way.

Sim pulls **Kenny** on to the scooter and they zoom off.

Blake follows.

*The journey is rougher now, over fields. It's all **Blake** can do stay on the scooter.*

He looks behind to see if the police are following.

He rides . . .

*Past **Caroline** at the funeral.*

*She reads from **Ross**'s notebook.*

Caroline 'I am standing on the horizon / I'm the dot you always see / that shadow in the distance / not a cruise-liner but me.'

Applause.

Blake keeps riding . . .

*Past **Sean** and **Antonia** offering their condolences to **Hugh** and **Penny**.*

Blake keeps riding . . .

Nina stands at the back of the funeral.

Blake stops.

Sim catches up.

Sim Which way now? What?

Blake Where's Kenny?

Kenny is no longer on **Sim**'s bike.

Sim I didn't feel him let go.

Blake How the hell could you lose Kenny!

OSTRICH BOYS PAGE 95 ACTIVITY 10: EXTRACT 7 (PAGE 62–3)

Blake *picks up the rucksack with the urn.*

Kenny Where are you going?

Blake Where do you think?

Kenny *does not move.*

Kenny I want to go home.

Blake *walks on.*

Kenny *disappears from view.*

Blake *walks on and on.*

Sara And he feels sorry about so many things.

Tariq That he hadn't noticed what was happening to you.

Alisha Though that's not true.

Kevin They'd known.

Tia But they'd ignored it.

Yasmin Buried their heads in the sand.

Jade The ostrich boys.

Julie A pride of ostrich boys.

A sign: ROSS.

Blake *stops, exhausted, his feet in agony.*

Blake Ross.

Blake *walks to the edge.*

He listens to the sea.

Blake *takes out the urn.*

Blake So.

Blake OK, let's go. The three of us back together, like Ross would have wanted. See, we're not far now.

Excerpted from the play *Ostrich Boys* by Carl Miller, copyright © 2011 Carl Miller. First published by Methuen Drama in 2011.

OSTRICH BOYS PAGE 99 ACTIVITY 11: EXTRACT 1 (PAGE 56-63)

Sim When was the last time you spoke to Ross?

Blake Friday, the day after Munro and his goons –

Sim In the park, yeah, I know. Ross phoned Kenny on *Saturday*.

Blake He never said.

Sim He got all confessional when you did your bungee jump.

Penny Kenny – he's the one that's good with computers? Ours has gone all peculiar and spirited Hugh's novel away somewhere into its insides. Kenny's the one to track it down, isn't he?

Sim Ross had lost his dad's novel on the computer.

Kenny told Ross it would still be there somewhere, but it could take a while to find.

Penny Years he's spent on that novel. Be daft to lose it completely, wouldn't it?

Ross *bangs at the keyboard.*

Sim Ross was in a panic. But Kenny didn't go round – said he was busy. How hard would it have been? He didn't go round.

–

Blake Nice, Sim. Always happy when you can blame someone else.

Sim I never said anything was Kenny's fault. Ross had an *accident*. Let's go.

Blake *takes out his phone.*

Sim Put that away.

Blake We should let someone know we're OK. That we're not going to kill ourselves. It might buy us time to get this finished.

Sim Who? My mum and dad'll be too busy bollocking me to get a word in edgeways.

Blake Mine too. Ross's sister?

Sim She's as bad as Munro and Fowler, reading out his poetry in front of everyone.

Blake You keep blaming everyone.

Sim I want the people who made the last days of his life miserable to suffer.

Blake *gives a little laugh.*

Sim You want a smack?

Blake You said Munro and his goons beat up Ross in the park.

Sim So? If there's one person who should have been chucked out of Ross's funeral it's Munro.

Blake How did you know it was in the park? I said to Ross that night – let's call Sim. And he just looked away. Were you there?

–

Blake You were in the park and you did nothing. You watched them beat Ross up. Sim. It only happened because he let you copy his homework and didn't grass you up.

Sim *sinks to the ground and buries his head.*

Blake *makes a call.*

Blake It's me. Yeah I know, we're almost there. Just – just tell everyone we're OK.

Nina *appears.*

Nina You've got to come back. Everyone's going wild. It's hurting everyone.

–

Sim Who is it?

Blake We wouldn't be here if Ross's funeral had been done properly. We're doing this for him.

Nina Are you?

Blake Do you know if they've got Kenny?

Nina Isn't he with you?

Blake Just tell everyone the suicide thing is stupid. Ross didn't and we won't either. OK?

Nina Wait –

Blake Got to go.

Sim Who was that?

Blake's phone rings again. He cuts it off.

Sim The way you were talking. It was someone you told what we're doing. Was it Nina?

Blake *looks down.*

Sim You told Nina what we were going to do?

Blake I – she was upset.

Sim Lots of people are upset, Blake. My mum and dad, your mum and dad, Kenny's mum, Ross's mum and dad, Ross's sister. Twat face Fowler's probably not feeling too great. So why?

Blake Dunno what you're getting at.

Sim Don't you?

—
Sim You're going out with her.

Blake What?

Sim Did Nina really pack Ross in because of those love poems getting read out? Or because she started seeing you?

Blake It's not how you think.

Sim Bullshit.

Blake Look —

Sim Did you steal your best friend's girlfriend?

Blake Sim —

Sim Did you steal Ross's girlfriend? Yes or no?

Blake Yes, but —

Sim *knocks Blake down.*

Blake *gets up.*

Blake She was going to finish with him anyway. You know I've always got on with Nina.

Sim *punches Blake.*

Blake You think I don't feel shitty about it. You think I'm happy he's dead.

Sim You said it.

Sim *spits at Blake.*

Blake Why am I doing this then? Why would I be getting myself into this much trouble if I wasn't his friend?

Sim Guilt. You're doing this because you feel guilty.

Kenny *staggers in.*

Kenny I could hear you two shouting all across the field.

Blake Where the hell have you been? We were looking for you.

Kenny I was looking for *you*. I've got this killing bruise where I fell off. Ow.

Blake Did you see any police?

Kenny No. Surprised they didn't find you though, screaming your heads off.

Blake OK, let's go. The three of us back together, like Ross would have wanted. See, we're not far now.

Sim *does not move.*

Kenny What is it?

Sim Ask Nina's new boyfriend.

Blake It's not like that.

Sim It's exactly like that. And you're just as bad. You could have helped Ross with his computer but you couldn't be bothered. How scared must he have been, how upset? Shitting himself about what his dad would say about him losing his crappy book.

Kenny That's not fair.

Sim He was your friend, Kenny. No excuse.

Blake And you watched Munro beat him up in the park and did nothing.

Kenny No.

Sim Yeah. Feel better now?

Blake *takes out his phone.*

Blake Nina? Are you there? Listen – Did he know? Just tell me. Did Ross know about you and me?

–

Blake Nina?

Nina He saw us together.

Ross *looks at Nina.*

Ross *looks at Blake.*

Ross *walks away.*

Nina Don't hang up again. They've found a note. They've looked at the computer and Ross had been going on all these chat rooms.

Nina *takes a deep breath.*

Nina He'd been trying to cover up what he'd done, delete it all, and that's how he messed up the computer. They were chat rooms for people who wanted to kill themselves. He posted a suicide note the same day he died.

Blake's arm *drops to his side.*

Nina Blake?

Sim *leaps at Blake and pins him to the ground.*

Sim Say it's your fault. Say it.

Blake *cries out in pain.*

Blake *pushes Sim off.*

Sim I can't believe we came all this way for some shithead who killed himself. Why did I have to copy his work? Because I'm not as clever as you three, I can't do it. I'm not going to be going off to university. Look at my mum and dad and the hole I live in. My brother couldn't wait to get out. He doesn't even come and see us. I should kill myself. But I don't. Because I'm not that weak.

Blake and Kenny *watch Sim go.*

Blake *picks up the rucksack with the urn.*

Kenny Where are you going?

Blake Where do you think?

Kenny *does not move.*

Kenny I want to go home.

Blake *walks on.*

Kenny *disappears from view.*

Blake *walks on and on.*

Sara And he feels sorry about so many things.

Tariq That he hadn't noticed what was happening to you.

Alisha Though that's not true.

Kevin They'd known.

Tia But they'd ignored it.

Yasmin Buried their heads in the sand.

Jade The ostrich boys.

Julie A pride of ostrich boys.

A sign: ROSS.

Blake *stops, exhausted, his feet in agony.*

Blake Ross.

Blake *walks to the edge.*

He listens to the sea.

Blake *takes out the urn.*

Blake So.

Nina Didn't you think about how many people you hurt?

Caroline Your sister.

Hugh Your father.

Penny Your mother.

Kenny Your friends.

Antonia Is that what you wanted? To destroy your friends.

Sean What kind of selfish piece of shit would do that?

Blake, *furious, is about to hurl the urn into the sea.*

Kenny What you doing?

Kenny *scrambles up.*

Kenny I got to a phone box and rang Kat. She's down there with her dad. It's all over the news. Reckon they've guessed where we're going. The police will be here, and Ross's mum and dad. We haven't got long.

*Everyone who knew **Ross** begins to appear.*

Blake So.

Kenny Is it fair to his mum and dad to leave him all here? Maybe we shouldn't just have blamed them.

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Blake You're just ash in that jar now. But if you hadn't been alive we wouldn't be here. All the things we wouldn't have done if you hadn't been alive. We might not even have met. You were like a magnet pulling us together. We'll always remember you. We'll always be telling stories about you. That's real immortality. Isn't it?

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