

NIGHT

*A woman and a man in their forties.
They sit with coffee.*

MAN

I'm talking about that time by the river.

WOMAN

What time?

MAN

The first time. On the bridge. Starting on the bridge.

Pause

WOMAN

I can't remember.

MAN

On the bridge. We stopped and looked down at the river. It was night. There were lamps lit on the towpath. We were alone. We looked up the river. I put my hand on the small of your waist. Don't you remember? I put my hand under your coat.

Pause

WOMAN

Was it winter?

MAN

Of course it was winter. It was when we met. It was our first walk. You must remember that.

WOMAN

I remember walking. I remember walking with you.

Night was first presented by Alexander H. Cohen Ltd. in an entertainment entitled *Mixed Doubles* at the Comedy Theatre on 9th April, 1969, with the following cast:

MAN

Nigel Stock

WOMAN

Vivien Merchant

Directed by Alexander Doré

That's Your Trouble, That's All, Applicant, Interview and *Dialogue for Three* were first presented on BBC Radio on the Third Programme between February and March 1964.

MAN

The first time? Our first walk?

WOMAN

Yes, of course I remember that.

Pause

We walked down a road into a field, through some railings. We walked to a corner of the field and then we stood by the railings.

MAN

No. It was on the bridge that we stopped.

Pause

WOMAN

That was someone else.

MAN

Rubbish.

WOMAN

That was another girl.

MAN

It was years ago. You've forgotten.

Pause

I remember the light on the water.

WOMAN

You took my face in your hands, standing by the railings. You were very gentle, you were very caring. You cared. Your eyes searched my face. I wondered who you were. I wondered what you thought. I wondered what you would do.

MAN

You agree we met at a party. You agree with that?

WOMAN

What was that?

MAN

What?

WOMAN

I thought I heard a child crying.

MAN

There was no sound.

WOMAN

I thought it was a child, crying, waking up.

MAN

The house is silent.

Pause

It's very late. We're sitting here. We should be in bed. I have to be up early. I have things to do. Why do you argue?

WOMAN

I don't. I'm not. I'm willing to go to bed. I have things to do. I have to be up in the morning.

Pause

MAN

A man called Doughty gave the party. You knew him. I had met him. I knew his wife. I met you there. You were standing by the window. I smiled at you, and to my surprise you smiled back. You liked me. I was amazed. You found me attractive. Later you told me. You liked my eyes.

You liked mine.

Pause

WOMAN
You touched my hand. You asked me who I was, and what I was, and whether I was aware that you were touching my hand, that your fingers were touching mine, that your fingers were moving up and down between mine.

MAN
No. We stopped on a bridge. I stood behind you. I put my hand under your coat, onto your waist. You felt my hand on you.

Pause

WOMAN
We had been to a party. Given by the Doughtys. You had known his wife. She looked at you dearly, as if to say you were her dear. She seemed to love you. I didn't. I didn't know you. They had a lovely house. By a river. I went to collect my coat, leaving you waiting for me. You had offered to escort me. I thought you were quite courtly, quite courteous, pleasantly mannered, quite caring. I slipped my coat on and looked out of the window, knowing you were waiting. I looked down over the garden to the river, and saw the lamplight on the water. Then I joined you and we walked down the road through railings into a field, must have been some kind of park. Later we found your car. You drove me.

Pause

I touched your breasts.

MAN

Where?

WOMAN

MAN
On the bridge. I felt your breasts.

WOMAN

Really?

MAN

Standing behind you.

WOMAN

I wondered whether you would, whether you wanted to, whether you would.

MAN

Yes.

WOMAN

I wondered how you would go about it, whether you wanted to, sufficiently.

MAN

I put my hands under your sweater, I undid your brassière, I felt your breasts.

WOMAN

Another night perhaps. Another girl.

MAN

You don't remember my fingers on your skin?

WOMAN

Were they in your hands? My breasts? Fully in your hands?

You don't remember my hands on your skin?

Pause

Standing behind me?

Yes.

But my back was against railings. I felt the railings . . . behind me. You were facing me. I was looking into your eyes. My coat was closed. It was cold.

I undid your coat.

It was very late. Chilly.

And then we left the bridge and we walked down the towpath and we came to a rubbish dump.

And you had me and you told me you had fallen in love with me, and you said you would take care of me always, and you told me my voice and my eyes, my thighs, my breasts, were incomparable, and that you would adore me always.

Yes I did.

And you do adore me always.

MAN

WOMAN

MAN

WOMAN

MAN

WOMAN

MAN

WOMAN

MAN

WOMAN

NIGHT

MAN

Yes I do.

WOMAN

And then we had children and we sat and talked and you remembered women on bridges and towpaths and rubbish dumps.

MAN

And you remembered your bottom against railings and men holding your hands and men looking into your eyes.

WOMAN

And talking to me softly.

MAN

And your soft voice. Talking to them softly at night.

WOMAN

And they said I will adore you always.

MAN

Saying I will adore you always.