

# HURT

*a play in 22 scenes*

*by*

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**Characters:**

Linda            46  
Lola             20; Linda's elder daughter  
Ellie            turns 18 during the play; Linda's younger daughter  
Michael        late forties

**Time:**        c. 2010

**Place:**        somewhere in the UK

**Set:**

Upstage:        open-plan kitchen/diner/lounge of an ordinary home; a knife block is  
                          in evidence

Downstage:    elsewhere

Note: Blackouts between scenes should be as short as possible, like the punctuating black screens in a film. Costumes should be changed where possible to indicate the passing of time.

## **Blackout**

*Lights up on*

### **Scene 1 (US/DS, night)**

*The TV is on. Upstage centre, a laptop computer screen illuminates **Ellie's** face. Nearly eighteen and overweight, she is lying on her back with the laptop on her chest. She types rapidly with her left hand while sucking the index and middle fingers of her right hand, removing them only to dip into a bowl of crisps. She is not visibly taking any notice of the TV*

*The downstage area is illuminated by disco lights; disco music blares*

*Down left, a spot illuminates **Linda**, 46, smartly dressed. She is ill at ease but outwardly relaxed and confident. She looks in a mirror to check her appearance*

*Down right, a spot illuminates **Michael**, about 50. He has dressed rather too young for his age but struts confidently. He looks in a mirror to check his appearance, and catches sight of Linda. Attracted by her, he makes his way over to her, engages her in (silent) conversation, makes her laugh*

### **Blackout (exeunt Linda and Michael)**

### **Scene 2 (US, day)**

*Ellie is in the same position as before, still sucking her fingers, still typing. The TV is still on*

*Enter **Lola** from upstairs. She is 20, slim and wearing childish pyjamas. She looks at herself in the mirror, roughly tidies her hair, inspects a spot, squeezes it perhaps. Then, without paying any attention to Ellie, she makes herself an "instant" breakfast (though it is early afternoon)*

**Lola:** Where's Mum?

**Ellie:** Uh? [an interrogative grunt, sounding like the French word *un*]

**Lola:** I said, "Where's Mum?"

**Ellie:** Out.

**Lola:** I can see that. Where?

**Ellie:** How should I know? With some bloke she met at Oscars.

**Lola:** Is that where she was?  
**Ellie** Another creep.  
**Lola** How do you know?  
**Ellie** They're all creeps.  
**Lola** The blokes you meet are.  
**Ellie** What about yours?  
**Lola** Steve's not a creep.  
**Ellie** No. He's even worse than a creep.  
**Lola** Pardon.  
**Ellie** He's a shagger.  
**Lola** You what?  
**Ellie** You heard.  
**Lola** A shagger? What the hell do you know?  
**Ellie** It's true. I know.  
**Lola** Crap.  
**Ellie** He just wants to get your knickers off.  
**Lola** At least I don't have to take mine off in the dark so they don't see the skid marks.  
**Ellie** Very funny.  
**Lola** Just because the only blokes desperate enough to go out with you are creeps, you think all men are.  
**Ellie** She doesn't care about us any more.  
**Lola** Here we go.  
*Lola mouths "Doesn't care about me" at the same time as Ellie says it*  
**Ellie** Doesn't care about me. Never did.  
**Lola** Perhaps it's time you started thinking about her. About what she wants.  
**Ellie** It's all about what she wants.  
**Lola** Why do you think she can't keep a bloke for more than a month?  
**Ellie** Because the blokes that go to Singles Night only want one thing.  
**Lola** Because as soon as she brings them home, they meet you.  
**Ellie** What's that got to do with it?  
**Lola** Everything.  
**Ellie** What's wrong with me?  
**Lola** When was the last time you looked in a mirror?  
**Ellie** Unlike you, I don't have to keep checking I can still smile.  
**Lola** You're just a blob.  
**Ellie** Better than looking like a stick insect.  
**Lola** A useless, helpless blob who can't do anything without "Mummy".  
**Ellie** You can talk.

**Lola:** "Mummy, can you cut my toenails?"

**Ellie:** "Will you take me to work, Mummy? It's raining."

**Lola:** "Mummy, can you blow my nose?"

**Ellie:** "I've run out of petrol."

**Lola:** "Can you wipe my arse?"

**Ellie:** "I got up late cos I was shagging all night."

**Lola:** At least I've got a job.

**Ellie:** Trainee hairdresser, wow.

**Lola:** Assistant stylist.

**Ellie:** Ooh, sorry.

**Lola:** Well, next time you want your hair cut, you know what you can do.

**Ellie:** Could do it better myself.

**Lola:** Might help if you washed it more than once a month.

*Lola retrieves the remote control from under Ellie, recoiling from her BO*

**Lola:** Might help if you washed more than once a month.

**Ellie:** Hey, what are you doing?

*Lola changes the TV channel*

**Lola:** Well you're not watching.

**Ellie:** I am.

**Lola:** What was on, then?

**Ellie:** "Who Wants to be a Millionaire?" So there.

**Lola:** And what was the last question?

**Ellie:** Put it back on.

**Lola:** You can't even answer the hundred quid question.

**Ellie:** I want it on.

**Lola:** Which of these is the title of a fairy story?

**Ellie:** Lola.

**Lola:** "Snow White and the Seven Dorks".

*Ellie gets up from the sofa and tries to retrieve the remote. Lola dodges her, bowl of breakfast in one hand, remote in the other*

**Ellie:** *(increasingly frantic)* Give it.

**Lola:** "Snow White and the Seven Dicks".

**Ellie:** *(shouting)* Give me the flicky.

**Lola:** "Snow White and the Seven Dildos".

**Ellie:** *(screaming in frustration)* Put it back on.

*Enter Linda from outside, in smart-casual work clothes, looking tired*

**Lola:** "Snow White and the Seven Creeps she met at Oscars".

**Ellie**        (*screaming in frustration*) Put it back on.  
**Linda**        What the hell is going on?  
**Ellie/Lola**   She started it.  
**Linda**        For goodness' sake, both of you. I go out for two hours and you're at each other's throats. What is it this time?

*Ellie and Lola speak at the same time*

**Ellie**        She turned my programme off.  
**Lola**        She won't let me watch my programme.  
**Linda**        For goodness' sake. (*she takes the remote from Lola*) What was on?  
**Ellie**        "Who Wants to be a Millionaire?"  
**Linda**        (*changing the channel*) There.

*Ellie sticks her tongue out at Lola and goes back to her place on the sofa*

**Lola**        She wasn't even watching it.  
**Ellie**        Was.  
**Lola**        Why do you always take her side? You always do what she wants. It's not fair. (*she goes upstairs*)

**Linda**        Lola ...  
**Ellie**        Now my head hurts.

*Linda follows Lola out.*

**Ellie**        Mum ...  
**Linda**        (*offstage*) Lola ...

*Linda re-enters*

*Ellie continues as before*

**Ellie**        Mum, I need a paracetamol.  
**Linda**        Well, get one.  
**Ellie**        I don't know where they are.  
**Linda**        For goodness' sake.

*Linda goes out to fetch paracetamol*

**Blackout**

### **Scene 3 (DS, day)**

*Linda and Michael walk hand in hand, laughing*

**Michael**    My ambition is to add it to the national curriculum.  
**Linda**        Laughing?  
**Michael**    Yeah. Nine o'clock Biology, ten o'clock History, eleven o'clock, Laughter.  
**Linda**        Some of my patients could do with a dose of it.

**Michael** You should write them a prescription: "To be taken three times a day. Beware of side-splitting effects. Could lead to chronic happiness."

**Linda** "And it's highly contagious."

**Michael** Oh, I don't know. Most people seem to be immune to it.

**Linda** Like that woman at the box office.

**Michael** *(pulling a face)* "No drinks, ice-creams or laughing in the auditorium."

**Linda** Oh, Michael. I haven't laughed so much in ages.

*Linda's MOBILE RINGS and she takes it out of her back pocket*

**Linda** Sorry. *(into phone)* Hi, darling. Everything okay? ... Oh. ... Well, I can't now. ... I'm out, with Michael. ... Yes. ... I'll be home as soon as I can, okay? ... Yes. ... All right. ... Okay. ... Bye.

*She puts the phone back in her pocket*

**Linda** *(to Michael)* Sorry about that. Ellie just wanted to—

**Michael** Back pockets are the worst place, you know.

**Linda** To keep a phone?

**Michael** Here, let me show you. Imagine you're in a crowded pub.

*He pushes past her as if trying to get to the bar, then holds up her mobile phone*

**Michael** Da-da.

**Linda** How did you ... That's amazing.

*Michael pretends to scroll through her Contacts*

**Michael** Now, let's see who else you're dating ...

**Linda** Ha.

*He hands back the phone*

**Linda** I didn't realize you were a kleptomaniac.

**Michael** Wallets and purses are my speciality.

**Linda** You're full of surprises, Michael.

**Michael** What are you doing tomorrow night? I'd like to take you for dinner.

**Linda** You're so sweet. I'll have to see.

**Michael** Have to see what?

**Linda** Just check with the girls.

**Michael** I thought they were all grown up.

**Linda** Well, Ellie's still seventeen. It's her birthday on the twenty-fifth.

**Michael** Kids are normally glad you're out of the house at that age. I know I was.

**Linda** It's just that she's ...

**Michael** What?

**Linda** Nothing.

**Michael** I like you, Linda. Lots.

**Linda** I like you, too, Michael. You make me feel young again. It's a good feeling.

**Michael** That's a yes, then?

**Linda** I'll let you know. Okay?

*They kiss and exeunt in opposite directions*

### **Blackout**

#### **Scene 4 (US, day)**

*Linda and Lola are fiddling with their mobile phones, which keep "pinging". They are clearly not talking to each other.*

*SOUND OF FRONT DOOR OPENING*

*They jump up and start laying the table*

*Enter Linda*

**Linda** Oh, thanks, girls. That's really kind of you to have everything ready for lunch when I get home.

*No reaction from Ellie or Lola, who continue to text, etc. as Linda automatically takes over*

**Linda** Don't tell me, you didn't realise the time – despite the fact that you're staring at your phones the whole time. But you've got far more important things to do than lay the table, haven't you? I mean, the virtual world is so much more interesting than the real one, isn't it?

*Realising neither of them is listening to her, she takes out her own mobile and calls Lola, whose phone rings*

**Lola** *(without looking to see who is calling)* Yeah?

**Linda** Oh, hello, I wonder if I could speak to Lola, please.

**Lola** Speaking. Who is it?

**Linda** Oh, no one important. Just the person who gave birth to you and wiped your–

**Lola** *(realising what's happening)* Mum, what are you doing?

**Linda** Ah, at last. I have your attention. Now will you please put those things away. I need to talk to you.

**Lola** Me?

**Linda** Both of you.

**Ellie** *(referring to a message she has just received)* You're not serious!

**Linda** Yes, I am– *(realising that Ellie is not addressing her)* Ellie.

**Ellie** What have I done?

**Linda** What haven't you done? would be more to the point.

**Ellie** Just because we didn't lay the table. Big deal.

**Linda** It's nothing to do with that.

*Lola laughs at a message she has received*

**Linda** I said, put them down.

**Lola** But she's still–

**Linda** Both of you. Now.

*They do so.*

**Linda** Thank you. Now–

*Lola's phone pings and she instinctively reaches for it*

**Linda** Turn it off.

*She does so, but Ellie's phone pings*

**Linda** Ellie.

*Ellie turns her phone off, but during the following, both girls surreptitiously look to see what messages they've just received*

**Linda** How nice to actually be able to have a conversation without having to compete with your friends every two seconds.

**Ellie** You haven't said anything yet – except "Now".

**Linda** As you know, when your father ... after your father and I split up–

**Lola** You mean, after you kicked him out.

**Linda** I didn't go out ... I didn't see anyone else for a long time because–

**Lola** You didn't want him to say you'd had an affair.

**Linda** Will you shut up.

**Ellie** I didn't–

**Linda** I said, shut up. Both of you. Shut up. I'm talking to you ...

*She picks up their phones and throws them onto another surface*

**Linda** ... and you're going to listen to me. Just listen. Okay? I didn't see anyone else because I wanted to give my full attention to you. And quite frankly, with a full-time job, I didn't have time for anyone else. I put my life on hold. For thirteen years. And I kept telling myself it was the right thing to do. I met several men I'd have quite liked to go out with, but I didn't. I didn't think it would be fair on them or on you. Finally, I did go out with someone. But it didn't work out. And then I met someone else, but that didn't work out either. For one reason or another. And then, as you know, the other night, I met a man called Michael. At Oscars. And before you say anything, no, he's not a creep; no, he's not old and ugly; and no, he doesn't just want to get me into bed. At least, I don't think so.

**Lola** Ellie says they all–

**Ellie** Don't you dare.

**Linda** Anyway, I like him and I think you will, too, and I'm going to invite him over so you can meet him.

*Silence*

**Linda** Well?

**Ellie** You told us to shut up.

**Linda** For goodness' sake. I'm going to invite him over and I want you both to be nice to him.

**Lola** We're always nice.

**Linda** Oh, yes, of course you are. That's why Richard came round three times and then stopped answering my calls, and David—

**Ellie** We could hear you. It was disgusting.

**Linda** What do you mean?

**Ellie** In bed. (*exaggeratedly*) "Oh! Yes! Ahhhh!"

**Lola** And Richard kept leering at me.

**Linda** I beg your pardon.

**Lola** He never did it when you were looking.

**Linda** I don't believe I'm hearing this. You ganged up on them both. You made sure they didn't last more than a month so that you could have me all to yourselves, like the selfish little brats you are. And if you do that again with Michael ... I'll ...

**Ellie** What? Kick us out?

**Linda** It's my house, do you understand?

**Lola** And you want it all to yourself.

**Ellie** So you can live your little love life with Mikey.

**Linda** His name is Michael.

**Lola** Before it's too late.

**Linda** How dare you?

**Lola** (*to Ellie*) You're right. She doesn't care about us.

**Linda** How dare you even say that?

*Lola retrieves their phones*

**Lola** Come on, let's go.

**Linda** You stay right here, both of you.

**Lola** It's all right, Mum, we know when we're not wanted.

**Ellie** We don't want to cramp your style.

**Linda** You can't do this to me.

**Lola** Don't worry about us. You just have fun.

**Linda** After all I've done.

*Exeunt Ellie and Lola*

**Linda** Don't do this. Don't do it. Not again. Please. I can't stand it. Please. No.

**Blackout**