

ROXIE AND CY

by

Sean Aita

adapted from Rostand's

CYRANO DE BERGERAC

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Hi y'all,

HYD (How ya doin') – or, using some older language you're also going to come across in the play – *How fare thee?*

The characters in this year's VET touring production play are, like you, post-millennials (i.e. *Gen Z*), and totally familiar with (teen and) *text slang*. And yet – you'll be surprised how Roxie and Cy sometimes communicate.

But before we'll *crack that code*, let's have a quick look at the story. Anyone familiar with French author Edmond Rostand and his play 'Cyrano de Bergerac'? Don't worry if you are not (... but why not google it and find out 😊?)

The romantic motif of the *ugly but true* character falling in *love* with a *beautiful* woman has been used by authors, composers and film directors for ages. Any books/films/operas/musicals etc. coming to mind?

Cy has been looking out for Roxie since Primary school. They are BFFs. Roxy loves Shakespeare and poetry, and so they communicate using quotations from Shakespeare's plays, but also from modern poets. Cy works in a warehouse but he's a rapper with a real feel for language – and a massive chip on his shoulder because his face is disfigured.

Roxie falls in love with her fitness instructor, Kris. He is nice, extremely good-looking, but by far not as literate as Cy ... sooo 😞 ... ❤️ or ❤️ ...?

BTW, there is also an interesting mix of *communication styles*: one-to-one communication, hand-written letters, emails, texts and DM on social networks – along with the possibility of fake accounts or -profiles, cat-fishing, ghosting ...

And yes, don't let's forget *friendship* – and as we all know, there are BBFs/ dudes/bruvv/besties, i.e. real friends ... and a lot of (fake) friends out there in the social media networks.

So, whether you like it *romantic* (poetry, Shakespeare, strong emotions) or *rough* (raps, vigilantes, criminals) ...

... *sit back, chill and relax, while you get the facts, about Roxie, Kris and Cy.*

Cheers,

Helena

Characters in the play

ACTOR 1: Roxie Robin – a 17-year-old college student*

ACTOR 2: Cy – a 19-year-old warehouse supervisor and amateur rapper with a facial disfigurement¹

ACTOR 3: Kris – an 18-year-old fitness instructor

ACTOR 4: Bret – a 20-year-old refuse collector²
Voice of Roxie's dad
A surgeon

The main location for our story is a run-down council estate³ in a town in the Midlands-region of England.

Worksheet available online as from September 2023
www.schooltours.at

***Note on the English Education system.**

Compulsory secondary school education in the UK is between the ages of 12-16. GCSE examinations are taken at age 16, the highest grade is an A* (star). Between 16 and 18 you can study for Advanced Levels (A-Level) at a sixth form, or tertiary college. University follows from 18-21.

¹ Lagermanager/-supervisor, mit entstelltem Gesicht

² Müllmann

³ verwahrloste ‚Sozialer Wohnbau‘-Siedlung

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Prologue

Cy enters holding a microphone. A beat plays.

CY (*raps*) It's not easy when you live where the streets are sleazy⁴,
You've got to believe me, times are hard,
Money's tight⁵, so sometimes all you can do is fight,
But that's not the man I want to be,
Finding words instead of blows⁶, and trying to do what's right,
Don't you see? We're all of us looking for something to set us free,
So, sit back, chill, and relax, while I give you the facts,
About Roxie, Kris and me.

Scene 1 - The Belmont Estate

Bret is trying to bounce a basketball. Cy enters.

CY: Hey Bret. What's up?

BRET: I was just going to shoot some hoops⁷.

CY: I didn't know you played basketball.

BRET: I don't.

CY: Huh?

BRET: You know at that party the other night I got chatting to this girl.

CY: The one who goes to college with Roxie? Marina?

BRET: Yeah, Marina. Well, I might have told her that I was a professional basketball player.

CY: You did what? You idiot!

BRET: I know.

CY: What was it you said to that other girl? The one you met on Tinder a couple of months ago.

BRET: I said I was a doctor.

CY: A doctor!

BRET: Surgeon, as a matter of fact. It would have worked, too, except⁸ she insisted we go to a pub quiz on our first date.

CY: A pub quiz? What happened?

⁴ ... wo die Straßen verdreckt sind ...

⁵ ... das Geld ist knapp ...

⁶ ... Worte finden statt Faustschläge ...

⁷ ... ein paar Körbe werfen ...

⁸ ... nur leider (bestand sie darauf, zu einem Pub Quiz zu gehen ...)

BRET: It was all going well until they asked the question ‘Where would you find the tibia and the fibia?’⁹

CY: What did you say?

BRET: I said they were islands in the Caribbean!

CY: What I don’t understand is why you think that making something up like being a doctor, or playing basketball, is going to get a girl to like you? Just be yourself! Besides, it’s creepy – cat-fishing, hiding your identity. That’s not cool.

BRET: I know it’s stupid, but every time I meet a girl I like, sooner or later she asks me what I do for a living.

CY: So?

BRET: So, I just can’t bring myself to tell them I’m a binman.

CY: A refuse collector.

BRET: It’s waste recycling operative now, actually.

CY: See, that doesn’t sound so bad. Anyway, there’s nothing wrong with being a binman. It’s a decent, honest job.

BRET: I know. Just not exactly glamorous, is it? Not what most girls dream about these days, is it? Ooh! I’m just waiting for my hero to drive up in his dustcart and whisk me off to the recycling plant¹⁰.

CY: I guess not.

BRET: You’re alright, you can always say that you’re a rapper.

CY: Yeah. That’s my superpower. By day he was just a simple warehouse supervisor, but by night he transformed into ‘Rap Man’! The only problem is this... (*He indicates his face*). Not exactly love’s young dream, am I? Look, if your job is giving you that much grief¹¹, then I can try to help you get a job as a loader at the warehouse.

BRET: I might just take you up on that¹². So, come on – spit it out.

CY: About?

BRET: What happened at the party.

CY: Oh, that.

BRET: Yeah. Oh, that. What the hell happened to you? Talk about a superpower, you transformed into the Incredible Hulk, Cy. You went crazy.

CY: I know I did.

BRET: So?

CY: Well, I’m not proud of myself.

BRET: You could have got yourself killed. You decided to pick a fight with the biggest, meanest...

CY: And stupidest...

BRET: Person at that party. Leroy’s cousin Marlon must weigh over 120 kg, all of it pure muscle. It was only because you managed to use his weight

⁹ ... Schien- und Wadenbein

¹⁰ ... der mit seinem Müllwagen daherkommt und mich zur Wiederaufbereitungsanlage entführt

¹¹ ... wenn dich dein Job so fertig macht ...

¹² Vielleicht komme ich darauf zurück.

against him and threw in a few of your nifty Taekwondo moves¹³ that you escaped without a broken neck. What on earth provoked you to do that?

CY: His dirty, potty mouth¹⁴.

BRET: What do you mean?

CY: You didn't hear what he said to Roxie?

BRET: I was on the dance floor treating Marina to some of my tastiest moves.

He demonstrates dancing.

CY: If those are your best moves, maybe you do need to pretend to be a doctor!

BRET: So, you saw red?

CY (*getting wound up*): I went ballistic¹⁵. The thought of that filthy-minded idiot threatening one of the loveliest, sweetest, most...

He realises that he has gone too far.

To a really good friend of mine... just made me flip.

BRET: Hold on, hold on. Rewind. Did I or did I not just hear the words 'loveliest' and 'sweetest'?

CY: I was just...

BRET: Talking about Roxie. I know.

CY: What I meant was...

BRET: What you meant was: you really *like* her. Don't you?

CY: Of course I do. We've been best friends since primary school.

BRET: Yeah, I know all that. But you *like* her, like her! Don't you?

Cy is torn, he is not sure what to say.

CY: Look, she thinks of me like an older brother. I've always looked out for her. Ever since we were kids.

BRET: But you don't feel the same, do you?

CY (*after a pause*): No.

BRET: You're crazy about her, aren't you?

CY: Yep.

BRET: Finally, he admits it! Tell her.

CY: Have you forgotten something?

He points at his face.

BRET: So?

CY: It's easy to dismiss it when you don't have to live with it day in and day out¹⁶.

I'm under no illusions. My face isn't the face that a girl wants to look at when she comes home at night. I see the way people look at me in the street or on the bus. When we were at school, I had to pretend not to notice groups of girls giggling and whispering about my face when I walked past them. If my life was a film, I'd be cast as the bad guy, the one who gets shot by the handsome hero in

¹³ ... und ein paar raffinierte Taekwondo Kicks angewendet hast ...

¹⁴ Sein dreckiges Mundwerk.

¹⁵ Ich bin total in die Luft gegangen.

¹⁶ Es ist leicht, es einfach abzutun, wenn du nicht tagtäglich damit leben musst.

the last frame or as the monster that the peasants like to chase with a bunch of flaming torches and some pitchforks¹⁷.

BRET: Come on, bruv, you're exaggerating¹⁸. But speaking as a friend to a friend – and don't take this the wrong way – you really need to be a bit less sensitive about it.

CY: What do you mean?

BRET: You know what I mean. If anyone so much as mentions the word *face* in your company, you jump down their throat¹⁹ after you've knocked their teeth out.

CY: No, I don't.

BRET: Excuse me, what about that guy at work who said that he laughed at a joke until he was red in the face? Didn't you kick him in the...

CY: Uh, maybe.

BRET: There you are then. Look, honestly, I think it gives you character.

CY: Shut up, OK?

BRET: Alright, alright, calm down. But you know Roxie likes you, no matter what you think about yourself. You guys are always hanging out together, you've always been like that. (*He gestures being close together.*)

CY: Not so much recently.

BRET: She's been busy preparing for her exams, hasn't she?

CY: Yeah. Look, Bret, like I said, she's my best friend.

BRET: Apart from me.

CY: Apart from you. So, what happens if she's not interested in being anything else? If I say something then she's going to be embarrassed. It's all going to get mega awkward, and we'll probably end up drifting apart and not seeing each other. I don't want that. I can't not have her in my life, Bret. I just can't, man. Roxie is the only girl I'm ever likely to be close to, to have some kind of relationship with, even if it is platonic. It means everything to me just to be where she is.

Cy's phone gives a ping.

BRET: Yeah, I get it. But even so. I still think you should tell her. You can't go through the rest of your life being in love with someone and not telling them. That's just too sad. You're a great guy, she's a great girl. You're both the smartest people I've ever met. I'd say you were made for each other.

Cy looks at his phone.

What's up?

CY: It's Roxie. She's just texted me.

BRET: What did she say?

CY: She says she needs to see me right away. She's got something really important she needs to tell me. Three smiley faces and four hearts!

¹⁷ ... oder als das Monster, das die Bauern mit brennenden Fackeln und Heugabeln verfolgen

¹⁸ Na komm, Bruder, übertreib mal nicht. (vgl. 'bro', *Oida*)

¹⁹ ... gehst du ihnen an die Gurgel ...

BRET: Four hearts? Oh my days²⁰. This is it.
 CY: What?
 BRET: It's one of those weird teleporting things.
 CY: Teleporting?
 BRET: When two people think of the same thing at the same time mysteriously.
 CY: Telepathic!
 BRET: What's teleporting then?
 CY: Like Doctor Strange, crossing into other dimensions.
 BRET: That's what you need to do. Get into the love dimension. Just watch out for the Daleks²¹.
 CY: That's Doctor Who!
 BRET: Go meet her. I'm going to bet you she tells you exactly what you just told me. She *likes* you.
 CY: No way!
 BRET: She *likes* you! Trust me. I'm a doctor²².
 CY: I thought you were a professional basketball player!

Scene 2 - The Coffee Cup Café / Studio Ten Gym

Roxie is sitting on a stool drinking a coffee and reading a book of poetry. Cy enters. Roxie curtseys and uses a Shakespearean greeting.

ROXIE: Good morrow, coz²³.
 CY (*bows*): Good morrow to thee, fair coz.
 ROXIE: Thanks for coming at such short notice.
They embrace.
 CY: What are friends for? How's college? Are the A-Levels going OK?
 ROXIE: Yeah. Look I'm sorry that I haven't seen you for a while, it's just that I've got loads of revision to do, but I'm really enjoying this term's topic area.
 CY: What is it?
 ROXIE: Love.
 CY: Love? Really?!
 ROXIE: Yep – through the ages. We're looking at everything connected with the subject: romance, social status, marriage, young love, love of family, country, etc. We have to study a Shakespeare play and explore the relationships in it.
 CY: Which one are you doing?
 ROXIE: 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'.
 CY (*quoting from the play*): "Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania."²⁴

²⁰ Brit. Version von OMG

²¹ Kriegerische Außerirdische aus der Serie 'Doctor Who'

²² Ehem. Werbeslogan für 'Dr Pepper' (Cola-Limonade): ... glaub mir, vertrau mir ...

²³ 'coz': eig. Kurzform für 'cousin', bei Shakespeare auch für sich nahestehende Freunde

²⁴ *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act 2, Scene 1 → siehe Worksheet

ROXIE: “What, jealous Oberon!”

It’s those scenes I’m interested in, contrasting them with the younger lovers.

CY: Nice.

ROXIE: We also have to choose a poem from this anthology to analyse. Listen to this one.

She recites.

“I carry your heart with me, I carry it in my heart, I am never without it, anywhere I go, you go.” Isn’t that beautiful?

CY: It is. Yeah.

ROXIE: Guess who wrote it.

CY: Uh. E.E. Cummings?²⁵

ROXIE (*astonished*): How did you know that?!

CY: Aside from Shakespeare, he’s your favourite poet.

ROXIE: You have a memory like an elephant!

CY: I’ll remember that.

ROXIE: Ha, ha. Nobody likes a smarty pants²⁶! Seriously though, Cy, you are really clever. You could have stayed on at school if you’d wanted to. Gone away to university. But instead, you’re stuck in this lousy town, working in a job that doesn’t stretch that brain of yours²⁷. What is it that keeps you here?

CY (*looking at her*): I don’t know really.

ROXIE: First chance I get and I’m out of here. I need to go somewhere where they care about something other than getting drunk on a Saturday night, breaking shop windows and getting into a fight.

CY: Good point. So, what’s all this about? What’s up?

ROXIE: I’ve got something I’ve been wanting to tell you for a while now, something really important.

CY (*nervous*): Oh. OK.

ROXIE: We *can* tell each other anything, right? Just like when we were kids?

CY: Yeah, of course.

ROXIE: OK. Good. Well, I’ve been keeping something secret from you.

CY: A secret?

ROXIE: Yeah, sorry.

CY: No problem.

ROXIE: I was embarrassed to say it to you, I guess. I wasn’t sure exactly how I felt and didn’t want to say something too soon.

CY: What do you mean? Say what?

ROXIE: It’s something really personal and I was scared to tell you.

CY: Scared?

ROXIE: Well, not really scared. Shy.

²⁵ E.E. Cummings, US-amerikanischer Dichter und Schriftsteller, 1894 – 1962

²⁶ Schlaumeier, Klugscheißer

²⁷ ... stattdessen arbeitest du in einem Job, der deinen Intellekt bei weitem nicht herausfordert ...

CY: But you're ready to tell me now?

ROXIE: It's taken a while, but now I'm certain about how I feel, and I can't keep it in any longer.

CY: Right. OK. (*Pause*) Are you going to tell me?

ROXIE (*blurting it out*): I've fallen in love!
Cy can't believe what he is hearing.

CY: Oh my God! In love? Wow, really? You have?

ROXIE: Is it that much of a surprise to you?

CY: Uh, yes. No. I don't know!

ROXIE: Well, the thing is, it appears that, at the moment, the person that I'm in love with doesn't even know that I love him. Though he might have guessed.

CY: Guessed? How?

ROXIE (*looking at Cy*): I think he might be able to tell from the way that I look at him.

CY: Oh. Right! I see.

ROXIE: He's a sensitive...

CY: Uh huh.

ROXIE: Kind...

CY: Uh huh!

ROXIE: Shy person.

CY: Uh huh!

ROXIE: But he's strong, too.

CY: Strong, right.

ROXIE: It's that combination between strength and vulnerability that is just so adorable²⁸. Are you sure you don't mind me telling you this?

CY: No! No! It's fine. Go ahead.

ROXIE: I just think that if I don't do something about it soon, then we might never get together. I think he is nervous about making the first move.

CY: Yes. You're right...

ROXIE: What?

CY: You're probably right.

ROXIE (*taking his hands*): It's wonderful that you understand me so well. It's such a relief.

CY: Go on. You were saying...?

ROXIE: I know it's not easy to say, but...

CY: Yes? What?!

ROXIE: He's just so good-looking.

CY: Good-looking?!

ROXIE: I know, I know. It's shallow of me to mention his appearance²⁹, but when you look into his eyes you can tell that inside, he has a really deep and sensitive soul.

²⁸ Es ist diese Mischung von Stärke und Verletzlichkeit, die einfach so bezaubernd ist.

²⁹ ... es ist sehr oberflächlich von mir, sein Aussehen zu erwähnen ...

Pause. Cy is completely shaken.

Well, say something.

CY: I don't know what to say. Where did you meet him? This deep, sensitive soul?
Kris, a handsome young fitness instructor enters on the opposite side of the stage which becomes The Studio 10 Gym. He works out whilst Roxie and Cy talk.

ROXIE: At the gym. He's my fitness instructor.

CY: Your fitness instructor! Seriously?

ROXIE: What's wrong with that?

CY: Hmm. Let me think. You're the girl who got ten GCSE A-stars and who, when she finishes her A-Levels, is going to be heading to university to study to be an English teacher. You're obsessed with poetry, you thrive on intellectual, witty, conversations about literature and philosophy³⁰ and you choose a muscle-bound bonehead to fall in love with³¹? A guy who'll struggle to use two-syllable words? A guy who is probably about as deep as this coffee cup and not quite as smart as this spoon.

ROXIE: What? You think just because he's a fitness instructor he can't have a brain? That is such a cliché. What about you? You work in a warehouse but you're not a dimwit³².

CY: How do you know that he does have a brain? Have you spoken to him?

ROXIE: Not exactly. He tells me how many reps³³ he wants me to do, that kind of thing. But there's this tension between us. I know he wants to say more, he's just shy.

Roxie looks across at Kris. He looks back at her and then exits.

CY: Yeah, that's totally convincing. Clearly, he's another Einstein. OK, so now you've told me about him. Thanks, and good luck. I've got to get going.

ROXIE: Hold on. I haven't told you what I want you to do for me.

CY: What do you mean? What could you possibly want from me?

ROXIE: That gang you're part of.

CY: ST16 is not a gang, Roxie, I've told you that a million times.

ROXIE: OK. Vigilante thing³⁴.

CY: It's not that, either. We make sure the estate is protected. It's a crazy world out there. You know why we founded it, don't you?

ROXIE: Yeah, Bret's niece.

CY: Exactly. Bret's niece, who overdosed aged nineteen because of some low-life pusher³⁵.

ROXIE: I know. It's just...

CY: What?

³⁰ ... du gehst auf in intellektuellen, geistreichen Gesprächen über Literatur und Philosophie ...

³¹ ... und dann verliebst du dich in einen muskelbepackten Hohlkopf?

³² Und du? Du arbeitest in einem Lager, und bist auch kein Dummkopf.

³³ 'reps': Abk. für 'repetitions'

³⁴ Bürgerwehr, Selbstschutzgruppe

³⁵ ... wegen eines verbrecherischen Dealers.

ROXIE: I think you should let the police handle it, rather than take things into your own hands.

CY: The feds³⁶ don't care about this estate, Roxie, you should know that.

ROXIE: I guess I worry it will end up causing more violence.

CY: The whole point of it is to prevent violence.

ROXIE: I suppose that must be what Kris thinks.

CY: Kris? Is that the name of... *(He can't finish the sentence).*

ROXIE: Yes. He only moved here from London a couple of months ago, but I've heard that he's supposed to be joining ST16. You have an initiation ceremony³⁷ coming up, don't you?

CY: And you've heard that we haze the new prospects³⁸? Is that right?

ROXIE: I've heard things can get rough, yes.

CY: That's true. We need to make sure that they have the nerve to stand their ground if things get bad on a patrol. So, is that it? That's why you called me so urgently. You want me to protect your little Kris?

ROXIE: Please, Cy? Please? *(She takes his hands.)* For me? Pretty please with sugar on top³⁹? Fairest coz?

Pause.

CY *(reluctantly)*: Oh, alright. I'll do it.

ROXIE: Thank you, thank you, thank you!

She kisses him on the cheek and exits. Cy watches her go. He touches his face.

Music plays as we transition to...

Scene 3 - The Bunker – Clubhouse of the ST16s

Kris enters with Bret. There are two microphone stands on either side of the stage.

KRIS: So, this is where the fun takes place. Nice clubhouse, apart from the mould on the ceiling⁴⁰ and that weird smell.

BRET: This isn't a game, you know. There are gangs of scumbags out there⁴¹ who would love to come onto our estate to mug people or to sell drugs⁴².

That's what ST16 is about. Making sure that doesn't happen. We haven't got spare money for a fancy club house.

KRIS: OK, take it easy. I was just kidding.

BRET: Just watch your mouth.

KRIS: OK. Chill out. I'm here because I want to help.

³⁶ Federal Police

³⁷ Aufnahmeterminal, -prüfung

³⁸ Und du hast gehört, dass wir die Anwärter schinden?

³⁹ Für mich? Bitte bitte, mit Zuckerguss oben drauf.

⁴⁰ ... abgesehen vom Schimmel an der Decke ...

⁴¹ ... Banden von Abschaum, Mistkerlen ...

⁴² ... Straßenräuber (die Leute überfallen) und Dealer ...

BRET: As far as I'm concerned, we don't need any help from some pretty boy from London. (*Points.*)

But you can go and join the other prospects over there if you want to.

Cy enters before Kris has a chance to move.

KRIS: Who's that, and what happened to his f...

BRET: Shhhh! If you want to get through tonight, you won't mention that word.

KRIS: What? Fa...

BRET: Shut it! That's Cy Gascon, one of the founders of ST16 and someone a soft Southerner like you doesn't want to mess with. He's leading tonight's initiation ceremony.

KRIS: And what exactly is the purpose of the initiation?

BRET: It's a test of courage.

KRIS: Courage. Is that right?

BRET: You have to prove tonight that you have the guts to deal with whatever goes down⁴³ and show you can stand up for yourself, and for other people.

KRIS: OK. Got it.

Bret picks up a microphone and speaks into it.

BRET: Alright. Listen up, ST16ers. We have some new prospects in the clubhouse tonight. (*Looks at Kris scornfully.*) Some of them better suited than others, but all of them ready to get started on tonight's initiation. So, I'll hand you over right away to our master of ceremonies, the awesome, three-time junior European Taekwondo champion and prince of rap rhymes – Mr Cy Gascon!

The sound of cheering from the ST16ers. A beat plays.

CY: Thanks for that, Bret, so prospects, don't fret⁴⁴, you don't need to be worried yet, (*to Kris*) though I'll take a bet that's sweat I can see on your forehead.

You want to be part of something, make a difference? You can't stand on the fence when it comes to self-defence, so we'll challenge your fear, let me make that clear, if you don't have courage, you shouldn't be here. This is our place, and you don't want to end up...

Kris grabs the microphone from Bret.

KRIS: Flat on your face?

CY: What did you say?

He moves towards Kris, then stops and turns to Bret.

Who is that?

BRET: Some newby from London. Name of Kris.

CY: Kris? Oh, OK. Kris, huh? (*He pulls himself together.*) You don't want to end up at the back of the race. You need to...

KRIS: Face up to things?

CY: Prepare. Be ready to dare. Don't make...

KRIS: A face?

⁴³ ... du musst beweisen, dass du den Mut hast zu handeln, was immer auch passiert ...

⁴⁴ ... keine Sorge ... (macht euch keine Sorgen)

CY: A mess, of this test. Be the best. So you end up...

KRIS (*moving closer*): Face to face?

CY: You may feel like you want to react, but you know that you'll be forced to...

KRIS: Face up to the ugly facts!

Cy is unable to hold his anger in any longer.

CY: Get out! Everybody!!

BRET (*to Kris*): Now you've done it! Say your prayers.

He exits. Cy moves forward, Kris flinches, he is sure he is going to be attacked.

At the last minute, Cy holds out his hand.

CY: Give me a high five.

KRIS: What the... is this some kind of trick?

CY: No trick. You've got guts, I'll give you that. (*Kris gives him a high five.*)

I'm her friend.

KRIS: Who's friend?

CY: Who do you think?

KRIS: Do you mean Roxie?

CY: I do.

KRIS (*grabbing his hand and shaking it*): That's wonderful news. Fantastic!

CY: You like her, then?

KRIS: Like her? I'm crazy about her.

CY: OK. Then she'll be in touch to set up a date. Piece of advice⁴⁵, read some E.E. Cummings first.

KRIS: Who's she? A dating guru?

CY: Not exactly.

KRIS: I need all the advice I can get. She's really smart, isn't she, Roxie?

CY: Yep. Super smart, razor sharp⁴⁶. Why?

KRIS: Then it's hopeless.

CY: What is?

KRIS: I'm a fitness instructor, not a university professor.

CY: You sounded pretty smart when you were taking the mickey out of me⁴⁷.

KRIS: That's different. I'm just no good at talking to girls, especially ones I like.

I get tongue-tied⁴⁸. I know, it's ridiculous, pathetic. Yeah, girls like the way I look, but that's it. I can get plenty of dates, but they never seem to go anywhere.

CY: Why not?

KRIS: I sometimes stammer when I get nervous, so I tend to say nothing at all, which is kind of weird and freaks people out, or I start telling stupid jokes that aren't funny because I can't think of anything else to say. Either way they usually ghost me after a couple of days⁴⁹.

⁴⁵ Ein kleiner Ratschlag ...

⁴⁶ Hoch intelligent und scharfsinnig.

⁴⁷ ... als du mich auf den Arm genommen hast.

⁴⁸ Ich bringe keinen Ton heraus.

⁴⁹ ... nach ein paar Tagen brechen sie den Kontakt unvermittelt ab.

CY: That sucks!

KRIS: Tell me about it! I'm crazy about Roxie, but I can't talk to her. I know I'll screw up any chance I have with her if I do, so I keep hurrying back to the office in the gym after her workout sessions and kicking myself for being so stupid.

CY: It's funny, I'm pretty sure I'd be good at the talking part. I'm never at a loss for something to say. I just never seem to get close. It's always 'swipe left' as far as I'm concerned⁵⁰. I don't even get as far as a date.

KRIS: That's the problem with dating these days, it's too easy to move onto the next person if the connection isn't perfect right away.

CY: Yeah, and it's all about the image. You have to have the right picture to get anywhere.

KRIS: You ever think of putting up a fake one⁵¹?

CY: And have them scream in shock when I show up at the date? No, thanks.

KRIS: I sometimes wish I could borrow the 'gift of the gab'⁵² from someone, just until I felt relaxed enough to be myself.

CY: I wish I had a handsome face.

KRIS: It's a pity we aren't one person instead of two.

CY: Yeah. You could be the face and I could be the voice.

KRIS: We'd be the perfect romantic hero.

CY: Yeah, we would. But instead, we'll just end up...

KRIS & CY: Miserable and alone.

CY: Roxie's going to be really upset about this⁵³, you know. She's very emotional and she's really into you. She once spent three weeks in floods of tears.

KRIS: Over a boy?

CY: When her cat died.

KRIS: Do you know her well?

CY: We've been friends since we were little kids. I hate it when she cries. I can't stand seeing her when she's feeling blue. She's going to be miserable.

KRIS: And so am I. Unless...

CY: Unless what?

KRIS: No. Nothing. It's a just stupid idea, forget it.

CY: Forget what?

KRIS: Nothing. I was just thinking...

He indicates the two of them.

CY: Not the "perfect romantic hero" option?

KRIS: I know, I know. It's crazy.

CY: Yeah. That is crazy.

KRIS: Really crazy.

CY: Yeah, mega crazy. (*Pause*) But...

⁵⁰ ... vgl. Tinder: 'swipe left' = jemanden ablehnen ('swipe right' = liken bzw. annehmen)

⁵¹ Hast du dir schon einma überlegt, ein 'gefaktes' Foto ins Netz zu stellen?

⁵² ... ich wollte, ich könnte mich gut ausdrücken ... (vgl: wortgewandt sein)

⁵³ Roxie wird sich mega kränken ...

KRIS: But?

CY: But it could work. Maybe.

KRIS: What?!

CY: You know something? I actually think it would work. In fact, I know it would.

I know everything about Roxie. I sometimes think I know her better than she knows herself. I could do it. I could be the voice. I could speak to her... for you.

KRIS: But why would you? What could you possibly get out of it?

CY: Uh, I... I'd get the chance to do something I'll never get to do in real life. To woo a beautiful girl⁵⁴. Even if it's for someone else.

KRIS: Really? Seriously?

CY: Seriously. Deal?

KRIS: Deal.

They shake hands.

KRIS: So how is this going to work?

CY: I have no idea. I'll meet you tomorrow at your place after work. Now, come here.

Kris approaches him.

KRIS: OK.

CY: Stand still.

Cy punches him in the eye.

KRIS: Agh! What was that for?

CY: The others can't think that I let you get away with taking the mickey out of my face, otherwise they will all be at it⁵⁵.

KRIS: Yeah. Sorry about that.

CY: No problem.

KRIS: See you tomorrow then.

CY: Yeah. See you. Make sure you put some ice on that. It's going to hurt.

Scene 4 - Roxie's and Kris's Homes.

Roxie enters into her bedroom. She has her laptop with her and a book of poems by the Victorian poet Alfred Lord Tennyson. Kris and Cy enter on the other side of the stage into Kris's bedroom.

VOICE OF ROXIE'S DAD (*calling from offstage*): Roxie. Dinner is in fifteen minutes.

ROXIE: Ok, dad.

KRIS: So, what's the plan?

CY: Give me your phone.

He types whilst talking.

⁵⁴ ... ein schönes Mädchen umwerben

⁵⁵ ... sonst werden die anderen auch damit anfangen (i.e. ständig auf mein Gesicht anzuspielden)

CY: Roxie spends most evenings these days revising for her exams. There's a good chance she'll be at home.

KRIS: Right. How does that help?

CY: Ask to add her on Instagram. I've added 'loves poetry' to your profile.

KRIS: But I don't know anything about poetry.

CY: Doesn't matter. I do.

KRIS: OK Done.

Roxie's phone pings. She picks it up and looks at it.

ROXIE: Oh my God! Kris? Instagram request. *(She punches the air.)* Yes!

(Reading) 'Fitness instructor who loves poetry'.

She accepts the request.

CY: Now, all we need to do is send your first DM⁵⁶.

Cy types into the phone. A ping.

ROXIE *(reading)*: 'If beauty were time, you would be an eternity'. Oh my God!

A little bit corny but - wow! Eat your words, Cy Gascon⁵⁷. The boy clearly has a brain. *(Writing)* 'If you had an eternity, how would you spend it'?

CY *(writing)*: 'In contemplating how best to make you happy'.

ROXIE *(writing)*: 'Would I be with you'?

CY *(writing)*: 'If you weren't, then a single second would *feel* like an eternity'.

ROXIE *(writing)*: Why the sudden online flirting? Has something changed?

CY *(writing)*: Yes, it has. I've realised that opportunities in life need to be seized with both hands⁵⁸, no matter what the outcome.

ROXIE *(quoting Shakespeare)*: "We must take the current where it serves or lose our ventures"⁵⁹.

CY *(writing)*: Smiley face.

ROXIE *(writing)*: Switch to video call?

CY: Oh no. She wants to switch to a video call!

Kris's phone rings.

KRIS: Answer it!

CY: Bad idea. I'll find an excuse not to. Just messaging is best to start with. *(Kris takes the phone from Cy.)* What are you doing?

KRIS: You know what? I'm suddenly feeling super confident about this. I think I can talk to her myself.

CY: Are you completely insane?

KRIS: You're here to back me up if anything goes wrong. I'm in the zone⁶⁰.

Kris accepts the call.

CY *(shaking his head)*: In the zone?! Good luck, Romeo. You're on your own, mate.

⁵⁶ Direct Message, Direktnachricht

⁵⁷ Schon ein bisschen schmalzig, aber...! Nimm alles zurück, Cy (i.e. was du über Kris gesagt hast)

⁵⁸ Mir ist klar geworden, dass man im Leben alle Chancen mit beiden Händen ergreifen muss

⁵⁹ *Julius Caesar*, Act 4, Scene 2 → siehe Worksheet

⁶⁰ Ich bin dabei (ich bin in meinem Element, ich habe es im Griff)

A tone sounds as the call connects. Cy backs away to leave Kris to speak to her alone.

KRIS *(to Cy)*: What?!

ROXIE *(to Kris)*: What?

KRIS *(to Roxie)*: Sorry, nothing. I was *(He stutters.)* I was JJJJJJust... uh. I was ... never mind. *(Nervous)* Er, hi.

ROXIE *(slightly shyly)*: Hi!

A very long and awkward pause.

I'm afraid I can't stay on for long. It's almost time for dinner.

KRIS: No ppproblem.

ROXIE: I'm so happy to see that you love poetry, too.

KRIS: Uh, yeah. Poetry. I'm big on poems.

ROXIE: Do you like Tennyson?

KRIS: Love it. I'm a big fan of sport.

ROXIE: Sorry?

KRIS: Roger Federer, Dominic Thiem, Serena Williams. Wimbledon. Love it all.

Big fan. Big.

ROXIE *(confused)*: Are you trying to be funny?

KRIS *(realising something is wrong)*: Uh, I... um, yeah, that's right. Of course, it's a joke. Ha! Ha!

ROXIE *(uncertainly)*: OK. A sense of humour could work.

KRIS: Great. What's blue and smells like red paint?

ROXIE: I don't know. What is blue and smells like red paint?

KRIS: Blue paint.

ROXIE *(not finding it funny)*: Oh. Yes, I see. But seriously, do you have a favourite poet?

KRIS: Uh, yes, of course.

Pause.

ROXIE: Who is it?

Kris looks over to Cy and gestures for help. Cy shrugs and turns his back. Kris mumbles something impossible to hear into the phone.

KRIS: Mffffhnskddddd!

ROXIE: Who? Sorry, I can't hear you. Who?

KRIS: Hupwwwwgrnf! *(Making a hissing noise.)* Sorry, I think there is a problem with the signal.

ROXIE: Or perhaps you have a special verse or poem that really moves you?

What's your favourite Shakespeare sonnet?

KRIS: Uh... I... um. To be or not to be...

ROXIE: Are you being funny again? Do you actually know anything about poetry at all?

KRIS: Er... Ah! Yes! Yes! I know a poem.

ROXIE: OK. Can I hear it?

KRIS: Er... There was an old man from Peru, who dreamed he was eating his

shoe, he woke in the night with a terrible fright, and found it was perfectly true.
VOICE OF ROXIE'S DAD: Dinner time!

ROXIE: Coming, dad! (*To Kris*) Look, I don't know what game you're playing, maybe this is a Tik Tok challenge or something. But I just don't think it's funny.

KRIS: No, Roxie... I...

Roxie ends the call. She looks at the phone for a moment, sighs and leaves the room. Cy claps his hands slowly.

CY: Bravo! Well played.

KRIS: Oh crap! I really messed up, didn't I? Why couldn't I think of a poem? That stupid limerick was the only thing that popped into my head.

CY: I've got a poem for you.

KRIS: Yeah?

CY: Roses are red, violets are blue, some poems rhyme, but this one doesn't.

KRIS: Cy! Don't mess about. This is serious. You've got to help me fix this.

CY: I don't know if I can. Or if I even want to. (*Cy's phone pings.*)

It's Roxie. She's sent me ten crying face emojis and one word: Kris.

KRIS: I'm such a useless idiot. I'm sorry. I should have listened to you. It's all over.

Kris sits with his head in his hands. Cy looks at him for a few moments.

CY: Alright. Alright. I'll see if I can help you.

KRIS (*embracing him*): Thank you!

CY: OK, OK. Just back off⁶¹ and give me some space.

KRIS: So, what are we going to do? What's the plan?

CY: I'll text you when I think of something. But don't hold your breath⁶².

Cy exits. Kris sits looking miserable.

Scene 5 - At the Skate Park.

Cy is holding a skateboard. Bret is clutching his own wrist. He seems to be in pain.

CY: You should get that looked at. It could be fractured⁶³.

BRET: I don't want to spend eleven hours sitting at the hospital in A & E⁶⁴ waiting to see a doctor. It'll be fine. Who knew that skateboarding could be so difficult?

CY: Duh!

BRET: I thought, if I could learn a cool sports skill, it might make me more interesting to girls.

CY (*sarcastic*): Good plan.

BRET: You can talk⁶⁵. This thing with you, Kris and Roxie is insane. Why the

⁶¹ Verschwinde jetzt mal ...

⁶² Aber halte nicht den Atem an (i.e. aber das kann dauern)

⁶³ Es könnte gebrochen sein.

⁶⁴ ... in Accidents & Emergencies ..., i.e. auf der Unfallstation

⁶⁵ Da redet der Richtige.

hell are you going along with it? It doesn't make any sense.

CY: I know. You're right. I'm asking myself the same thing, but I just want her to be happy. She called me late last night, really upset. She doesn't understand what happened. She asked me to speak to him and see what was going on. She can't understand if it was just a mismatched sense of humour thing⁶⁶ or something else. She's desperate about it. I think she really likes him.

BRET: But he's not the right person for her. You are.

CY (*pointing at his face*): We've been through that. It's Kris she has feelings for, not me.

BRET: A wet Southerner⁶⁷.

CY: He's a good guy really, when you get to know him.

BRET: I'll take your word for that. Talk of the Devil.

Kris enters. He is carrying a gym bag.

KRIS: Hey, Cy.

CY: Alright, Kris? Heading to work?

KRIS: Yeah, evening shift. Hi, Bret.

Bret mutters.

I've got a message for you.

BRET: What?

KRIS: You see that girl over there?

BRET: The cute red-haired one?

KRIS: Yep. She told me she saw you fall over on the ramp.

BRET: Terrific.

KRIS: She's a registered first-aider⁶⁸. She wanted to know if you'd like her to strap your wrist up⁶⁹.

BRET: She did?!

He smiles and waves at her.

CY: A first-aider? That's perfect.

KRIS: Why?

CY: Didn't you know? Bret's a doctor!

Bret exits.

KRIS: Have you heard anything from Roxie?

CY: Yeah. I spoke to her.

KRIS: And?

CY: It's not going to be easy, but I've got an idea.

KRIS: Yes!

CY: Meet me outside Roxie's place later tonight. I'll text you her address.

KRIS: OK. I get off work around ten.

CY: See you then.

⁶⁶ ... ein fehlgeschlagener (ungeschickter) Versuch, witzig zu sein ...

⁶⁷ A soft/wet Southerner (vgl. S.14): für manche Midlanders sind Londoner 'verweichlichte Southerners'

⁶⁸ Sie ist eine ausgebildete Ersthelferin.

⁶⁹ ... ob sie dir dein Handgelenk bandagieren soll

Scene 6 - Outside Roxie's apartment & Roxie's Balcony.

During the transition some balcony railings appear on one side of the stage. Cy enters on the other side of the stage. Kris follows him in.

KRIS: Let me get this straight⁷⁰. I'm going to stand over here, throw some gravel at Roxie's bedroom window and when she comes out onto her balcony, you're going to whisper to me and tell me what to say? This is your brilliant idea?

CY: I know it's not perfect but it's the best idea I could come up with. Your face and my words, that was the original plan. Hopefully it's a winning combination.

KRIS: As long as she forgives me for that mess the other day.

CY: Just don't recite any limericks⁷¹ or tell her any jokes. OK. Go ahead.

KRIS: What should I say when she comes out?

CY: Start with an apology.

Kris mimes throwing some gravel. After a couple of minutes Roxie appears.

ROXIE: Who's there? Who is it?

Kris steps out so she can see him.

KRIS: It's me.

ROXIE: Kris!

KRIS: I'm really sorry about the other night. I was...

CY (*whispers*): "Overcome and transformed into an ass"⁷².

KRIS: Overcome and transformed into... (*whispers to Cy.*) Into what?

CY (*whispers*): An ass! Trust me.

KRIS: Transformed into an ass?

ROXIE (*laughs*): Then I must be your Titania.

CY (*whispers*): And I'm your Bottom.

KRIS (*to Cy*): I can't say that!

CY: It's from Shakespeare! 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'!

ROXIE: You've gone very quiet.

CY (*whispers*): You take my breath away. It's hard to speak.

KRIS: You take my breath away. It's hard to speak.

ROXIE: I love to hear the sound of your voice, now that we're both in tune.

CY (*whispers*): Gazing at one another under a gibbous moon⁷³.

KRIS: Gazing at one another under a gibbon...

CY (*whispers*): Gibbous!

KRIS: Gibbous! Moon.

Cy pulls Kris back.

KRIS: Ugh!

ROXIE: What?

KRIS: Nothing. I'm fine. I was just...

⁷⁰ Also nochmal ... (Ich stehe dort drüben und und werfe ein paar Steinchen auf Roxies Fenster ...)

⁷¹ Nur sage bitte keine Limericks auf ... (recite → rezitieren)

⁷² *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act 3, Scene 1 → siehe Worksheet

⁷³ Wir tauschen im Licht des Dreiviertelmonds tiefe Blicke aus.

CY: This is too difficult, let me take over.

KRIS: What? How?

Cy pushes him back.

ROXIE: What's the matter? Where are you?

CY (*imitating Kris*): I'm still here. When I look at you, I'm struck dumb⁷⁴, I can't speak or think clearly. But here in the shadows, I can finally tell you what I feel in my own true voice.

ROXIE: Your voice does sound different.

CY: You've changed me. (*He beats a heartbeat rhythm using his hand on his chest.*) I can whisper words of love, that echo round my head, giving voice to my heart, while you listen from above. Can you hear me in the darkness, from the shadows down below? Can you understand how much it means? I need to let you know, you're my night and day, my food and drink, the very air I breathe, you're the sun and moon, the stars and sky, I want you to believe that I'll be here for you till the mountains crumble to the sea, but I swear to you, no matter what, that you'll always be free...

KRIS: Roxie!

CY: Shh!

ROXIE: What?

CY: I was... er, sighing.

ROXIE: Oh Kris. You're a poet! I don't think anyone has ever made up a poem especially for me before. That was beautiful.

CY: Hearing you say that is absolute bliss⁷⁵.

KRIS (*loudly*): So, perhaps I could ask you for just one small kiss?

ROXIE (*surprised*): Oh! A ...

CY: Shut up, Kris!

ROXIE: What?

CY: I was talking to myself. I said, shut up Kris, because I was being stupid and rude!

ROXIE: I...

KRIS (*whispering*): Why can't I kiss her? I thought this was supposed to be about helping me? What's the problem?

ROXIE: Is everything OK?

Cy looks at Kris. Kris gestures at him.

You asked me for a kiss?

CY: Oh, trespass sweetly urged⁷⁶.

ROXIE: Romeo!

CY: Juliet!

ROXIE: This balcony is high and hard to climb, but if you come to the door of the

⁷⁴ Wenn ich dich anblicke, bin ich sprachlos ...

⁷⁵ Dich das sagen zu hören ist die reinste Glückseligkeit.

⁷⁶ *Romeo and Juliet*, Act 1, Scene 5 → siehe Worksheet

⁷⁷ Ich öffne dir das Tor ... (→ Buzzer = Türöffner)

block, I will buzz you in⁷⁷ and you can take the lift up to the roof. I'll meet you there in two minutes!

KRIS: Yes!

Roxie exits. Kris grabs Cy's hand and shakes it vigorously.

Thanks, Cy. I don't know how I can ever repay you.

He exits.

CY (*quoting from 'Romeo and Juliet'*): "Love is a smoke and is made with the fume of sighs".

Scene 7 - Montage.

Cy raps to us.

CY: I stood in the street, knowing just what I was missing, Roxie and Kris on the rooftop kissing. Felt bad, real sad, knew I'd won her and lost her, yet in part I knew that my words had crossed her mind and lodged in her heart. The chance to say what I felt, feel her melt, meant so much that I just couldn't stop and let it drop. So, I carried on with the plan, making him seem like a literate man.

Roxie is on her mobile phone talking to Cy.

ROXIE: He's been writing me poems. Hand-written and posted through my door before I wake up.

CY: Poems? Really? Any good?

ROXIE: They're wonderful.

CY: So, he isn't an idiot after all?

ROXIE: An idiot? He's a genius.

CY: A genius? Come on, Roxie. Don't exaggerate.

ROXIE: A genius.

CY: Alright. I'll take your word for it!

ROXIE: I seriously think he could get something published if he wanted to.

They're like the best song lyrics and he's always...

She exits still talking. Bret enters, he is speaking into his mobile phone to Cy.

BRET: So, after she strapped my wrist up, she told me she'd seen me working on the bins. Turns out her older brother's one of my workmates. Long story short⁷⁸, I'm taking her out for a drink on Friday.

Bret exits. Kris enters he is speaking into his mobile to Cy.

KRIS: It's working like a dream. I'm meeting her again tonight.

CY: You're not struggling to talk to her?

KRIS: We're not actually doing much talking, though I did accidentally blurt out another joke the other night⁷⁹.

CY: You didn't? What was it?

⁷⁸ Der langen Rede kurzer Sinn ... (→ umgangsspr. Abk. von 'To cut a long story short, ...')

⁷⁹ ... obwohl ich versehentlich mit einem Witz herausgeplatzt bin ...

KRIS: How does Darth Vader like his toast?

CY: I don't know.

KRIS: On the dark side.

CY: Uh! What did she say?

KRIS: She laughed!

Kris exits.

CY: But nothing lasts forever. Isn't that what they say? Fate steps in and you never know when one simple decision will change things forever.

Scene 8 - The Bunker

Cy, Bret and Kris are all wearing jackets with the ST16 logo on the back.

BRET: Ready for your first patrol then?

KRIS: Sure.

CY: You'll take the North side of the estate up to Millbrook road. If you run into trouble, then use this.

KRIS: What is it?

CY: It's a sonic alarm. Should be loud enough to make someone back off, and one of us will hear it and head over your way.

BRET: Keep your eyes peeled⁸⁰. Things could get lively tonight. There's a gang of dealers that want to move into this area, we've been pushing them back for a few weeks now. They usually show up in a black Mercedes four by four. If you see them, call me or Cy and we'll get everyone out.

KRIS: OK.

BRET: Oh, I nearly forgot. Cy, I've got some good news and some bad news.

CY: Yeah? What's the good news?

BRET: I sent a video of you rapping at one of our club nights to a music promoter⁸¹.

CY: Yeah?

BRET: There's this 'Be-Boy Battle Royal Jam' in Manchester. They want you to take part. All the best rappers will be there. It's your big chance to show off your talent, bro.

CY: Awesome. What's the bad news?

BRET: You have to be up there for a week.

CY: A week?!

BRET: There's a series of rounds before the finals. A film crew's shooting a documentary about it. It's a big deal. First prize is two thousand pounds and a recording contract. My uncle says he can put you up at his place.

CY: I guess I can throw a sickie at work⁸². But how am I going to get to Manchester?

⁸⁰ Halt die Augen offen.

⁸¹ Konzertveranstalter, Musikagent

⁸² Ich könnte nächste Woche krankfeiern.

There's another flipping transport strike this weekend.
KRIS: I've got a car. I can take you.
CY: Seriously?
KRIS: Of course. I owe you⁸³, remember? (*To Bret*) Is there room for two at your uncle's?
BRET: I don't know. Maybe.
KRIS: I had next week booked as holiday⁸⁴, but Roxie's got to revise for her exam, so we can drive up on Friday night, if you like.
CY: Cool. But what are you going to do in Manchester for a week?
KRIS: There's a circuit training course up there I've been meaning to look into. That reminds me. My gym bag's still in the car.
BRET: So?
KRIS: My phone's in it. I won't be a minute.
Kris exits. There is a pause.
BRET: Are you alright spending a week with lover boy?
CY: For an opportunity as good as this sounds, I'd be willing to spend the week with Donald Trump.
A piercingly loud alarm.
BRET: Is that what I think it is?
CY: Kris!
BRET: Shit!
They both exit at a run.

Scene 9 - A Street on the Estate.

ROXIE: And you're sure he's alright?
CY: Yeah, he's fine, though it's probably for the best that we're getting out of town for a few days. A couple of those dealers we've had trouble with were threatening a small kid who was sitting on a wall next to Kris's car. Kris waded in and tackled them himself⁸⁵.
ROXIE: Thank God he's not hurt. And you've got to promise me you'll look after him when you're in Manchester.
CY: I promise.
ROXIE: I'm really going to miss the poems he's been putting through my letter box.
CY: Has he got your email address?
ROXIE: Yeah. Why?
CY: Just wondered.

⁸³ Ich schulde dir noch was ...

⁸⁴ Ich habe für nächste Woche Urlaub eingetragen ...

⁸⁵ Kris ist dazwischen gegangen und hat sie alleine herausgefordert.

Scene 10 - The Boom Room Club in Manchester

ANNOUNCER: Alright. Big it up and make some noise for the winner⁸⁶ of the 2023 Boom Room club's Be-boy battle. Let's hear it for my man... Mr Cy Gascon, A.K.A 'MC Rano'⁸⁷.

CY (*rapping*): Listen up, people, listen up, to what I say. Listen up people, gotta go your own way. Hanging on the street, getting down with the beat⁸⁸, where I come from it's not clean or neat, in a concrete estate, you can't wait or hesitate, gotta make your own fate before it's too late. Listen up, people, listen up, to what I say. Listen up people, gotta go your own way. You gotta organise, be wise, don't listen to the lies, only so much you can take, you've got to recognise - it's up to you, to stay true, do what you gotta do, and to muscle on through⁸⁹. Listen up, people, listen up, to what I say. Listen up people, gotta go your own way. Listen up, people, listen up, to what I say. Listen up people, gotta go your own way.

The sound of applause and cheering. Kris enters.

KRIS: You were on fire tonight!

CY: I can't believe I won! Two thousand pounds! Whooooo!

KRIS: And a record contract, Cy. This could be it for you. It could change your life.

CY (*slightly less enthusiastic*): Yeah. Maybe.

KRIS: What?

CY: Are they going to want to make music videos featuring this?

Points at his face.

KRIS: You need to get over this, Cy. It makes you interesting. Anyway, performing rap isn't like being in a boyband, is it?

CY: I guess not.

KRIS: I'll get the car. I'm really looking forward to seeing Roxie. I've missed her badly. She's hardly had a minute to spare with all the revision she's been doing.

He is about to exit.

CY: Hey Kris, just wanted to bring you up to speed⁹⁰. If Roxie mentions the emails you sent her this week...

KRIS: Emails?

CY: You've been sending her love poems via email.

KRIS: Really? OK. Neat. How many?

CY: Five. A day.

KRIS: Five a day?! That's crazy, what did you think you were doing?

CY: Nothing. I just thought... I was inspired... I wanted to... I thought she

⁸⁶ Legt noch ein bisschen was drauf und begrüßt den Gewinner ...

⁸⁷ Applaus für meinen Freund Cy Gascon, also known as 'MC Rano'

⁸⁸ ... getting into the music ...

⁸⁹ ... sich weiterhin durchkämpfen (-wursteln)

⁹⁰ ... nur damit du informiert (wörtl. 'am Laufenden') bist ...

would...

KRIS: Just a minute. Oh man. I am so stupid, but that's what you've been counting on, isn't it? How did I not see it before?

CY: See what?

KRIS: You're in love with Roxie yourself. That's what all this has been about, isn't it? A completely messed-up way for you to tell her.

CY: No!

KRIS: You love her. Admit it!

Cy, giving up.

CY: Yes.

KRIS: Right. OK. Fine. In that case, I'm going to call her right now and tell her the whole thing.

CY: You can't do that. Not over the phone. It's too cruel. She's going to be devastated⁹¹.

KRIS: Alright. Not for you, for her sake I'll wait. But the minute we get back. We'll go to her together and she can choose between us.

CY: It'll be you.

KRIS: I hope to God you're right.

He exits. Cy's phone rings. We see Bret on his phone calling.

CY: Hey, Bret.

BRET: Just seen the news about the rap battle on Twitter. Brilliant work, my man. You deserve it.

CY: Thanks.

BRET: Is Kris with you?

CY: He's just gone to get the car.

BRET: You need to give him a heads-up⁹². Those dealers with the Mercedes four by four have been posting videos, threatening him. They were really pissed off after that incident the other night. They've been cruising around here, looking for him. He needs to watch his back⁹³.

CY: OK. Thanks, Bret.

Scene 11 - In Kris's car.

Cy and Kris are in the car. Kris is driving. Cy is asleep, snoring. He wakes up suddenly.

CY: Uh! How much further have we got to go?

KRIS: We've just passed Stoke-on-Trent, so less than ten minutes.

CY: What's the time?

⁹¹ ... am Boden zerstört ...

⁹² Du musst ihn warnen.

⁹³ Er muss sehr gut aufpassen.

KRIS: Quarter past three. Oh!

He holds his hand up in front of his eyes.

CY: What is it?

KRIS: Car behind us is using his full beam headlights⁹⁴. He's right on my backside. I'll let him pass.

Cy looks round.

CY: Shit!

KRIS: What's up?

CY: It's them. The Mercedes. Look out! They're going to ram us!

There is a huge grinding crashing sound, and Kris and Cy are thrown about the car in slow motion. They freeze for a moment, then the sound segues into the sound of an ambulance.

Scene 12 - A corridor in Stoke on Trent General Hospital / Roxie's flat.

Cy is on the phone to Roxie. He has a sling on his arm.

ROXIE: I'm on my way. Dad's going to give me a lift to the hospital.

CY: Look, before you get here, Roxie, you need to know something. It's Kris ... when the car rolled, he was thrown out of the side window.

ROXIE: OK.

CY: He hit the tarmac⁹⁵, Roxie. His face... He's... I don't know how to tell you this but he's not going to be the same as he was before.

ROXIE: I don't care. It doesn't matter what he looks like as long as he's alright. Those poems he sent me, every day. He poured out his heart to me in them, Cy. I know I was ridiculously shallow at first, mainly caring about his looks. But the person who could send those words, those tender, beautiful words is the person that I love.

CY: He is?

ROXIE: Absolutely, forever. No question.

CY: Roxie... I... need to tell you something...

ROXIE: What is it?

A surgeon wearing a mask enters.

CY: Just a second. *(Cy mutes the phone.)* How is he, Doc?
The surgeon shakes his head.

SURGEON: I'm very sorry. We did everything we could.
Cy takes this news in. He then unmutes the phone.

CY: Roxie?

ROXIE: What is it? What did you want to tell me?

CY: I wanted to tell you that Kris really loved you.

⁹⁴ Der Drängler hinter uns kommt mit Fernlicht daher.

⁹⁵ Er ist auf dem Asphalt aufgeschlagen.

ROXIE: Loved? You don't mean?

CY: I'm sorry, Roxie.

She breaks down in tears.

Scene 13 - The Cemetery - One Year Later

Roxie is holding a bunch of flowers in one hand and her phone in the other. Cy enters.

ROXIE (*looking up*): Good morrow, coz.

CY: Good morrow.

ROXIE: You remembered.

CY: Of course I did.

ROXIE: One year ago today. I can't believe it happened so long ago. It still feels like it was just yesterday. I really appreciate how you've been there for me over the worst of it, Cy. I don't know what I would have done without you to help me through.

CY: The funeral was one of the worst days of my life. I keep thinking if I'd just seen that car sooner, we might have been able to get away from them.

ROXIE: Or you might have both been killed. You can't blame yourself. The doctor told me you gave him CPR at the roadside⁹⁶ and kept him alive long enough to reach the hospital.

CY: At least they're all in prison.

ROXIE: One good thing.

CY: How are you feeling?

ROXIE: Pretty numb⁹⁷.

CY: What time are you leaving? Do you have time for something to eat before you go?

ROXIE (*shaking her head*): My train's in half an hour.

CY: How's university?

ROXIE: It's good. How's the music business?

CY: Pretty crazy.

ROXIE: I bet. I'm really glad you're here, Cy. Will you help me with something before I go?

CY: Of course. Anything.

She passes him her phone.

ROXIE: The last poem that Kris sent me. I was going to recite it. But every time I try, I can't stop crying. Can you read it for me?

CY: Out loud?

ROXIE: I just want his words to be spoken. Today. Here.

CY: Sure.

⁹⁶ Wiederbelebung bei Atem- und Kreislaufstillstand (→ Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation)

⁹⁷ Ziemlich betäubt, gefühllos

Roxie closes her eyes. Cy looks at the screen and reads.

If my love were a secret, one you never knew,

How would I hide it, what would I do?

Would I whisper so soft, to the stars in the sky,

That glorious truth, till the day that I die.

Cy stops looking at the screen and recites from memory.

Would I keep it forever, locked up in my heart,

Like a treasure that's buried, whilst we're both apart.

ROXIE (*under her breath*): That voice.

She opens her eyes and sees that Cy knows the poem.

Oh my God!

CY: Would you guess, do you think, from a word or a sigh,

That my love would not fade, even if I should try...

ROXIE: It was you!

CY: What? No.

ROXIE: How could I have been so stupid? Of course, it was you. That night on my balcony... the emails... those words. They were all yours. All of it was you.

CY: It wasn't.

ROXIE: Are you in love with me?

CY: Kris was in love with you, and you loved him.

ROXIE: I did. But it wasn't really him that I was in love with, was it? You wrote the poems, the messages, you cat-fished me⁹⁸! You, Cy! You! My best friend. The person I trusted more than anyone. How could you do something like that to me?

CY: I'm sorry, Roxie.

ROXIE: Sorry? Sorry doesn't even come close, Cy. You tricked me. Made a fool of me and broke my heart. Were you working together, you and Kris? What did you think you were doing? Were you laughing at me behind my back? Is that it? Let's see if we can make her fall in love with us both at the same time? It's sick!

CY: It wasn't like that, I swear to you. We were going to tell you everything when we got back from Manchester, but then...

He points towards the grave.

ROXIE: Everything I've believed has been a lie! I've been mourning a lie⁹⁹!

CY: No, that's not true. Not everything was a lie, Roxie. Kris loved you. He really loved you.

ROXIE: And you?

CY: Yes, alright. It's true, I do love you. I love you. I've loved you for years.

ROXIE: Then why didn't you say anything to me?

Cy points at his face.

⁹⁸ Vgl. S. 6

⁹⁹ Ich habe eine Lüge betrauert

Oh please! Do you really think I'm that shallow?

CY: I'm sorry, Roxie. I just couldn't believe that someone as perfect as you could love someone like me.

ROXIE: Is that what you think of me? Someone perfect? I wonder if you actually know me at all.

CY: I know what a brilliant, kind, and loving friend you've always been to me, and I can't bear the thought of losing that. Can you ever forgive me?

ROXIE: To be honest, I don't know. *(She looks at her watch.)* I haven't got time for this now. I need to get to the station.

CY: Of course. Do you want me to walk you?

ROXIE: No! Why would I, after everything that's just happened?

CY: OK. Yeah. I'm really sorry, Roxie.

ROXIE: Goodbye, Cy.

CY *(after a beat)*: Goodbye, Roxie.

Roxie exits. Cy stands alone for a few moments, he seems broken. Roxie returns slowly.

ROXIE: Coz.

CY *(surprised)*: Yes, coz?

ROXIE *(after a pause)*: I'm back in a couple of weeks for a reading week. We can meet up and talk then, once I've had time to process all of this¹⁰⁰.

CY: That's great. Thanks, Roxie.

Roxie exits. Cy turns to the audience. He quotes from Shakespeare's 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'.

Like Shakespeare says, "the course of true love never did run smooth".

The end.

¹⁰⁰ ... wenn ich etwas Zeit gehabt habe, das alles zu verarbeiten ...

Comprehension Check

Prologue

- What are the names of the main characters in the play? Match each name with the correct job description:
..... studies für her A-Levels
..... works in a warehouse
..... works as a fitness instructor
- Where do they live?
- Is it a nice area to live? Say why/why not.

Scene 1

- Who is Bret? What does he do for a living?
- What is *cat-fishing*? Tick the correct box:
 - ... collecting stray cats and take them to an animal shelter
 - ... using fake identities (photos, profiles) on Social Media
 - ... catching catfish for cooking fish 'n' chips
- Complete the following statements about Cy:
Cy's superpower is
He is brilliant at
He has to live with a
- What do we learn about the connection between Cy and Roxy?

Scene 2

- How do Roxy and Cy communicate with one another?
- Which topic area is Roxy working on for her A-Levels?
- Roxy's favourite poets are and
- What is the big secret Roxie wants to tell Cy?
- How does Cy feel about fitness instructors?
- Who or what is ST16?
- What does Roxie ask Cy to do for her?

Scene 3

- Bret doesn't seem to like Kris – why is that, do you think?
- What is the ST16 initiation ceremony? Tick the correct box below:
 - ... a crash course in Taekwondo
 - ... a rap contest
 - ... a test of courage
- How does Kris provoke Cy? Why does he do it, do you think?
- What do we learn about Kris?
- Complete the following sentences:

Cy is very good at talking but

Kris is very good-looking but

- What is the *perfect romantic hero*-option? What are they going to do?

Scene 4

- What does Cy add to Kris' Instagram profile?
- Kris and Cy first contact Roxie via ...
 - ... Facebook posting
 - ... Instagram DM
 - ... TikTok video
- Kris feels *in the zone* and answers Roxie's video call. Write down at least three things that go wrong during their conversation.
- How does Roxie feel now? How does she express her feelings?
- What does Kris expect Cy to do for him now? What do you think he should do?

Scene 5

- Why is Bret learning to skateboard? Is this going according to plan? Say why/why not.

Scene 6

- Underneath Roxie's bedroom/balcony, Cy is going to whisper prompts for Kris to repeat. Do you think this is ... Say why.
 - ... a brilliant idea
 - ... a nasty trick and unfair to all of them
 - ... completely stupid and bound to fail

- Why does Cy eventually take over? What is he saying in his rap?
- Did you expect the scene to end the way it does? Why/why not?

Scene 7

- At this point in the play all four characters seem to be quite happy. Complete the statements below and explain why:

Roxie – because

Cy – because

Kris – because

Bret - because

Scene 8

- Kris is going on his first patrol with ST16. What does he need to watch out for?
- What are the good news Bret has for CY?
- Kris is going to give Cy a lift to Manchester. Why is he offering?

Scene 9

- What happened when Kris was on patrol?
- Roxie is worried about Kris. What does she ask Cy to do?
 - ... write more poems for her
 - ... look after Kris
 - ... send her emails every day

Scene 10

- Complete the statements: Cy has won
 1.
 2.
 3.
- Kris wants Cy to stop worrying about his face. What does he tell him?
- How does Kris find out that Cy loves Roxie? What does he want to do now?
- Bret asks Cy to warn Kris – what about? Why does Kris need to be careful?

Scene 11

- Complete the text below:

On the drive back, Cy When he wakes up,
they are A black Mercedes
4x4 Kris
wants to let him pass but

Scene 12

- Cy phones Roxie from the hospital, telling her about Kris' injuries. Who does she say she loves? Complete the sentence:

The person
..... is the person that I love. Absolutely,

- What happens just as Cy is about to confess?

Scene 13

- One year later at the cemetery. Put **T** for true and **F** for false next to the following statements:

Kris' death feels like it happened years ago.
Cy was always there for Roxie and helped her through.
He regrets falling asleep in the car.
Roxie is going to recite the last poem Kris sent her.
She realises that all words and poems were actually Cy's.
Roxie thought Kris was her best friend and now feels betrayed.
Cy has loved Roxie for years but was afraid of telling her.
Roxie tells Cy she never wants to see him again.

- In your mind's eye, imagine this tableau: CY standing there, his heart broken, and Roxie walks away ... but suddenly she turns round and suggests they meet up in a few weeks. Now speculate – could there be/will there be a happy end? How? Explain why/why not you think so.

Famous last words – over to you!

- Did you like the play? Say why/why not.
- Which of the characters did you like best? Say why.
- What are, *for you*, the three main topics in the play?
- Was there a scene that you found particularly touching? Which? Why?
- Rate the play on a scale from 1 (super) – 5 (not my thing):