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Kiss of Death

A thriller

Simon Williams

Samuel French — London
New York - Toronto - Hollywood



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KISS OF DEATH

First performed at The Mill at Sonning Dinner Theatre on
17th May 2000, with the following cast:

Zoë Lang
Bernard
Brocklebank
John Smith

Susie Trayling
Michael Percival
David Quilter
James Staddon

Directed by Simon Williams
Designed by Jacqueline Hutson

CHARACTERS

Zoë Lang, a young actress

Bernard, a criminal psychologist

Brocklebank, Detective Superintendent, Special Covert

Criminal Investigation Department

John Smith

The action takes place in an old, refurbished science lecture room and in John Smith's derelict flat

Time — the present

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT I

SCENE 1 Science lecture room. Morning

SCENE 2 Science lecture room. Three days later

SCENE 3 Derelict flat. Later the same day

ACT II

SCENE 1 Science lecture room. The following morning

SCENE 2 Derelict flat. Forty minutes later

SCENE 3 Science lecture room. The next day

Other plays by Simon Williams
published by Samuel French Ltd

Laying the Ghost
Nobody's Perfect

ACT I

SCENE 1

An old but refurbished science lecture room

We have the impression that the room is remote and deep underground. The atmosphere of age is offset by the presence of a great deal of new technology. The room is shaped like an amphitheatre of sorts; the theatre auditorium forms the seating area. The room is windowless and sound-proofed, with sliding doors L and R, operated by a remote control unit or by keypads next to the doors. There are desks, chairs, filing cabinets, telephones etc., a fridge and a recording console. A feature of the room is a large practical television monitor (or two smaller ones) linked to a practical hand-held video camera. Around the room are various other technical devices, remote controls and practical speakers. There are piles of files on the desks

When the CURTAIN rises the stage is in darkness

Two sets of footsteps echo down a long corridor. A door clangs shut in the distance. A single set of footsteps approaches the room

The Lights come up

Bernard, a dour figure in very dark glasses, sits at a desk, writing on a clipboard. Brocklebank stands at the back of the auditorium, unnoticed as yet

One of the sliding doors opens electronically and Zoë enters. She is chewing gum

Bernard closes the door with a remote control. He does not look up at Zoë —yet; he remains immersed in the notes on his clipboard throughout the following

Zoë Is this it?

Bernard Yes.

Zoë This isn't much of a place.

Bernard No.

Zoë Do you know what is supposed to happen next?

Bernard No.

Zoë Are you with these people, then?

Bernard Yes.

Zoë But they don't tell you what's going on?

Bernard No.

Zoë Doesn't that strike you as being a bit daft?

Bernard No.

Zoë You're not a huge amount of fun to hold a conversation with, are you?

Bernard No.

Zoë You're quite happy with just the monosyllables?

Bernard Yes.

Zoë You don't feel like moving on from the yes and no scenario?

Bernard No.

Zoë Hm? Shall I leave perhaps?

Bernard Wait here.

Zoë Please.

Bernard Please. Wait here.

Zoë Wow — brilliant. Couldn't we in fact flesh that sentence out a bit? We could for instance have begun it with "I'm sorry for the delay but perhaps you wouldn't mind waiting here." Or: "I know you've come a long way" — three changes of train, a bus ride and a short walk in the rain actually — "and given up a lot of your valuable time to be here, but bear with us if you can ..." Something like that would have been nice. Wouldn't it?

Bernard My job description does not include making conversation with you at this point.

Zoë No chit-chat then?

Bernard Not one of my duties, alas.

Zoë Alas.

Bernard Please sit down and wait. (*Pre-empting her*) Silently.

Zoë (*sitting down; robotically*) Order to sit accepted. Sitting in progress.

Sitting completed. (*Pause*) You don't want to see my tits, then?

Bernard No.

Zoë Do you always wear dark glasses?

Bernard Yes.

Zoë Have you heard the story about the nun and the blind man?

Bernard Yes.

Zoë rises restlessly and peers into the auditorium

Zoë Hallo. Hallo. Is anybody there? I'm getting a little impatient.

Bernard Yes.

Zoë Cooeee! (*To Bernard*) Tell whoever it is I'm leaving. OK?

From the darkness at the back of the auditorium Brocklebank speaks quietly without moving

Brocklebank Stay where you are.

Zoë Hi, there.

Brocklebank Good-afternoon. You're Zoë Lang, are you?

Zoë Yes. With no "i". Lang with no "i". *(To Bernard)* No "i".

Bernard *(correcting his notes)* No "i" — pardon me, I'm sure.

Brocklebank I'm sorry your journey was so tiresome.

Zoë Have you been there all along?

Brocklebank There's a lot to be said for tranquillity, you know. You have the documents?

Zoë *(to Bernard)* She made no comment.

Brocklebank Very thorough. All right. "Now is the winter of our discontent."

Zoë "You know your Shakespeare."

Brocklebank "Am I really ...?" *(He laughs)* That's by way of being a joke.

Zoë Isn't that when people laugh?

Brocklebank Very prickly. Very right on. Gum out.

Zoë You don't think it's rather archaic, using Shakespeare for security?

Bernard hands Zoë a Post-It note; she uses it to get rid of her gum

Brocklebank I suppose it is, Miss Lang with no "i"; perhaps in future I'll use lyrics from the Spice Girls.

Bernard *(laughing)* "You know your Shakespeare." My! That is amusing.

Zoë So that's the formalities done.

Brocklebank More or less. I'm sorry you were kept waiting.

Zoë Are you?

Brocklebank comes on to the stage from the auditorium

During the following Bernard picks up the video camera

Brocklebank Yes. A little. Were you offered tea?

Zoë No.

Brocklebank Bernard.

Bernard Yes, sir?

Brocklebank Did you not offer Miss Lang tea?

Bernard No, sir.

Zoë We were too busy chatting away, weren't we?

Brocklebank Would you like some tea?

Zoë No, thank you. Why have I been brought here? What is this place?

Brocklebank It's the lecture room. We use it from time to time. It offers privacy and a certain atmosphere.

Zoë An ordinary office would have been fine with me.

Brocklebank The location is not in question. It's not for you to question the location. *(To Bernard)* Bernard, are you ready?

Zoë Yes, I'm ready.

Brocklebank Would you sit down, Miss Lang?

Bernard *(pointing to a specific chair)* There.

Zoë sits in the chair (possibly with her back to the audience). Brocklebank touches a switch and a spotlight comes up on Zoë. Bernard turns on the camera so that we see Zoë's image live and in close-up on the screen

Brocklebank Good. You don't mind the camera?

Zoë No.

Bernard Say something.

Zoë Your jacket needs taking to the dry cleaner.

Brocklebank I imagine you know why you are here?

Zoë It's work, I assume.

Brocklebank I wish I could say it was. Miss Lang — may I call you Zoë? —

Zoë nods

— I'm afraid I have some bad news for you.

Zoë Oh yes?

Brocklebank We tried to reach you earlier. It's your child.

Zoë My child ... *(She rises)* What are you saying? Has something happened to Joshua?

Brocklebank I am afraid so ... Please sit down.

Zoë What has happened?

Brocklebank We did all we could.

Zoë *(after a pause)* He's dead. You mean he's dead? He can't be ...

Brocklebank I'm so sorry. So very sorry.

Zoë *(sobbing)* I can't believe it. I just can't believe it ...

Brocklebank I'm so sorry. We all are.

Zoë What happened? I thought it was going so well.

Brocklebank It was. He didn't suffer though. He's at peace. A sweet child. Would you like some tea? Bernard could fetch you a brandy perhaps.

Zoë You bastard ...

Brocklebank I beg your pardon?

Zoë I told you it had to stop, but you wouldn't listen.

Brocklebank What are you talking about?

Zoë The Defronskzi trial.

Brocklebank The what? What are you saying?

Zoë I know what you're doing. I've seen the files.

Brocklebank (*moving to Zoë*) What files have you seen, Miss Lang?

Zoë (*quite overcome*) My baby ... My baby. You bastards. (*She pushes him away*) You people — you're nothing but a bunch of freaks.

Brocklebank I think you'd better explain yourself, don't you, Bernard?

Zoë You see, I have spoken to Martin at the Lab ... I know.

Brocklebank Martin was nobody. He was a plant.

Zoë A plant. I don't think so. I never gave my consent. I never signed the form. You killed him — you killed Joshua. (*She tries to avoid the camera*)

Bernard pans the camera to follow Zoë

Brocklebank Please control yourself. What's done is done. I offer you my deepest sympathy.

Zoë Turn that thing off. Turn it off. I'm going to destroy you. It's as simple as that.

Brocklebank Look ... I had no idea you knew so much.

Zoë I trusted you. You knew his immune system wouldn't take it. Didn't you? You killed him.

Brocklebank He died peacefully. In the end we had no choice.

Zoë I do. I have a choice. I'm going to put you behind bars, this whole laboratory is a fraud.

Brocklebank We are a government agency, remember. We are protected.

Zoë Then I'll track you down, Mr "Now is the winter of our discontent", and I'll kill you. Do you understand?

Brocklebank Look, we are prepared to be generous, you know, very generous.

Zoë Oh, yes ... Go on.

Brocklebank You are an attractive woman ——

Zoë What? Is that appropriate?

Brocklebank I don't see why not — you are very attractive.

Zoë Thanks to Dr Zeiglemann.

Brocklebank Zeiglemann?

Zoë It was he who reconstructed what was left of my face.

Brocklebank (*scrutinizing her*) Is that right?

Zoë Yes. After the explosion.

Brocklebank A terrible accident.

Zoë It was sabotage, as you well know.

Brocklebank Of course. He did a good job.

Zoë Thank you. My father's reputation was at stake.

Brocklebank Your father?

Zoë He was in "Thin Air".

Brocklebank "Thin Air"?

Zoë The Seventies rock group ...

A buzzer goes off. Brocklebank switches off the spotlight

Bernard switches off the video equipment and makes notes on a clipboard

Bernard That's it. Time's up.

Brocklebank The fun and games are over.

Zoë (*checking her watch*) It's over? That's it. So soon.

Brocklebank You did very well. A high score. There's nothing like improvisation for sorting out the men from the boys.

Zoë The women from the girls. It was fun.

Brocklebank I liked her initiative, didn't you, Bernard?

Bernard nods

(*Looking at Bernard's notes*) I see you gave her a nine for initiative. That's praise indeed. Nine. The baby thing was very out-on-a-limb. You moved it forward well. The laboratory idea — very quirky. The grief, the Defronskzi stuff — very droll, very sharp.

Zoë Yeah, well, a lot of it seemed pretty flaky.

Brocklebank Not for you, surely, a student of the famous Tuck Van Meiser in New York?

Zoë It was only a three-month course.

Brocklebank (*consulting the notes*) In Improv. and Free Thinking. I'm impressed ... What have we got? ... Nine for imagination. And a very rare ten for speed of reaction. Well done. The plastic surgery and the explosion was going a bit far. That can be dangerous.

Zoë We were running out of time.

Brocklebank Only a seven for resolution. And on the sexual level — your response was weak. I offered the compliment, made an opening and you diverted.

Zoë It was a pathetic compliment. "You're an attractive woman." Hardly assertive.

Brocklebank It's not my skill that's under scrutiny here. We marked it as a missed opportunity.

Zoë It's your party.

Brocklebank I liked the aggression though, the "I'll track you down and kill you" stuff. Very good. Eight.

Zoë Thank you.

Brocklebank (*looking at the score*) Now is that kind? For general turn-out — three.

Zoë (*to Bernard*) That's quite ruined my day.

Brocklebank Oh dear, you won't like what he's put under "Any other comment".

Zoë (*snatching the clipboard; reading*) "Spunky attitude and peachy tits" — you are a dysfunctional little tosser, aren't you?

Brocklebank Settle down. It's altogether a very good score. Forty-two out of a possible fifty. Well done.

Zoë Am I supposed to care?

Brocklebank Don't you?

Zoë It may be forty-two out of fifty in your book. In mine it's four hundred pounds in cash for "an improvisation workshop".

Brocklebank It's a failing, you know, this need you have to control the agenda. Patience is a virtue not only in a woman, but in a person and more especially in an agent.

Zoë I've done what I was paid for, I don't have to sit here and listen to you two jerk off with your score cards and stuff.

Brocklebank So nicely put. You've been recruited before, you know the deal.

Zoë Is that what this is?

Brocklebank As if you didn't know. As if she didn't know. Of course it's a recruitment. What did you think it was — an audition for *Puss in Boots*?

Zoë No sign of Dick, though.

Bernard (*chuckling*) No sign of Dick. Humorous.

Brocklebank You take pot luck on these recruitment sessions.

Zoë I can look after myself.

Brocklebank You like adventure then?

Zoë That's not quite what I said.

Brocklebank It's a leap in the dark coming to this kind of assignation?

Zoë Yes, it is.

Brocklebank You can't complain then if the circumstances don't suit you.

Zoë I've never given up the right to hand back my fee and walk out. (*She moves to the sliding door*)

The door remains closed

Open the door. (*Pause*) Open the frigging door.

Bernard Language, language.

Brocklebank (*to Bernard*) You're right — she is spunky. (*To Zoë, very amiably*) Miss Lang — Zoë — please sit down. Sit. (*He shakes Zoë's hand*) George Brocklebank. Detective Superintendent Special Covert Criminal Investigation Department.

Zoë You have ID?

Brocklebank Listen to her. Don't make me laugh. ID? You wouldn't know ID if it bit you on the nose. (*To Bernard*) Show her.

Bernard passes her some documentation from his clipboard, including a photograph of Brocklebank

Zoë (*looking at the photograph*) It's a very old photograph.

Brocklebank I'd say that was impudent, wouldn't you, Bernard? I hate bad manners.

Zoë Old but distinguished all the same. (*To Bernard*) And who are you?

Brocklebank He's Bernard Heal.

Zoë I asked him.

Brocklebank His name is Bernard Heal.

Zoë Is that right?

Bernard Yes. That's my name. You can call me Mr Heal.

Zoë Do I get to see your paperwork?

Bernard produces his paperwork with a flourish. Zoë looks at it

What did the MOD need you for, then, Bernard V. Heal? Your conversational skills? What's the V for?

Bernard Valentine.

Zoë Is that right? (*She picks up the video camera, switches it on and points it at Bernard*)

We see Bernard's face on the screen, staring at us. He still wears his dark glasses

Let's put the boot on the other foot. What sort of a man are you, Bernard Valentine Heal?

Bernard Imperturbable. That's what I am. Imperturbable.

Zoë Is that right? In my book, you're a nerd.

Bernard You're too kind.

Zoë Why don't I want to trust you? A criminal psychologist, a boffin and four sets of initials to prove it. Let's have a look at you, shall we? I'll tell you what sort of man you are, Bernard Valentine Heal. You're the sort that gets quite a long way up my nose.

Bernard Oh! I am sorry.

Zoë What is it with you? Are you shy or what? Perhaps you don't like women, is that it, Mr Heal? What's with the bins? Huh? What have you got to hide, I wonder.

Bernard I do not like to be observed. I like to observe without being observed. Is that so wrong? I hide my eyes for your benefit, to save you — (*He takes off his dark glasses*)

We see Bernard's face in close-up. His eyes are completely white. The effect shocks Zoë

(Growling into the camera) Embarrassment.

Zoë *(shocked)* I'm sorry. I'm so sorry ... I didn't think ... *(She switches off the video camera)*

Bernard *(of the dark glasses)* They are not just for the rich and famous. They are for those of us scarred or injured.

Brocklebank In the course of duty.

Zoë I'm so sorry.

Brocklebank It's not for you to question his credentials, Zoë. Believe me as nerds go, he's pretty sharp. *(He takes a bottle of water from the fridge)* Do you want some water? *(He tosses the bottle to Zoë)*

Zoë *(catching the bottle)* Thanks. *(She drinks)*

Brocklebank Anyway, Miss Lang with no "i", you are ideal for our purposes — *(to Bernard)* isn't she?

Bernard nods

Zoë And they are?

Brocklebank We'll come to that. *(He studies Zoë's papers)* The results of your medical are quite satisfactory. One or two interesting features there ... *(He chuckles)* And ... *(He picks up a very distinctive file from the desk and studies it)*

Bernard watches Brocklebank carefully and shakes his head to indicate "Not now"

(Thinking better of mentioning the file) Your Mensa score is very reasonable. Better than average. *(He reads; then)* I'm curious that you refused the lie detector.

Zoë That's what I do, it's part of the job. I tell lies, I pretend to be other people. You don't judge that with electronics.

Brocklebank Fair enough.

Zoë Plus the bloke in charge was a dork.

Bernard You didn't take to Eric then?

Zoë No.

Brocklebank You've been doing a lot of security work, industrial surveillance? Does that mean espionage these days?

Zoë "A rose by any other name —"

Brocklebank "—would smell as sweet". ... Some undercover stuff for the CID and a stint with the Narcotics boys. How was that?

Zoë It beats temping.

Brocklebank Their report says you function well under pressure. It says you're cool and thorough.

Zoë *(to Bernard)* No mention of peachy tits then.

Brocklebank It says here you broke a felon's arm last year?

Zoë Yes.

Brocklebank Are you into martial arts?

Zoë No. I threw a wok at him.

Brocklebank Not exactly rolling in money.

Zoë I get by.

Brocklebank Bernard.

Bernard hands Brocklebank a paper from Zoë's file

(Reading) One thousand eight hundred and thirty-seven pounds overdrawn.

Zoë Don't I get any civil rights along the line?

Brocklebank Of course you do. How rude of me. Well ... *(He puts away the very distinctive file)*

Zoë What's that? What is that file?

Brocklebank Private is what it is. Very private.

Zoë If it concerns me, I'd like to see it.

Brocklebank I don't think so. To business. *(He pauses. To Bernard)* Do the names.

Bernard picks up several files and places them, one by one, on the desk. There are photographs and news cuttings in the files

Bernard Julie Pearson, Anne-Marie Mayo, Hayley Foster, Judy Aykroyd ...

Brocklebank And Caroline Bryce ... Mean anything to you?

Zoë *(after a long pause; appalled)* Let me go. I want to leave. I'm leaving.

Brocklebank Please don't.

Zoë Tell me this isn't what I think it is.

Brocklebank I can't do that. I can't tell you that.

Zoë They were all murdered, weren't they?

Brocklebank nods

By the same man?

Brocklebank nods

A serial killer?

He nods

That's who you are after?

He nods

What is it they call him in the papers?

Brocklebank } *(together)* The Surgeon.
Bernard }

Brocklebank They call him the Surgeon.

Zoë *(holding a press clipping)* The Surgeon — that's right. He mutilates his victims. Dismembers them or something.

Brocklebank Disembowels actually. You don't want to hear the details.

Zoë *(reading)* "An ice-cool operator known to prey on young homeless girls." ... "The Ripper of our times." ... Caroline Bryce ... This was only three months ago ... "There are rumours that the notorious Surgeon is now playing a cat-and-mouse game with the investigating team, leaving false trails and then taunting them."

Brocklebank *(nodding)* The bastard.

Zoë "A police spokesman said they were currently pursuing several lines of inquiry." *(She looks up)* In other words you haven't got a clue.

Brocklebank No.

Zoë So who exactly are you guys?

Brocklebank We were co-opted independently on to the case five months ago. Our brief was to set up a new initiative, with a covert strategy of ...

Zoë The word you seem to be trying not to use is "entrapment".

Brocklebank You're ahead of me of course, Miss Lang.

Zoë You want to use me as bait?

Brocklebank I'd like to have sweetened the pill.

Zoë So what did you have in mind?

Brocklebank We've identified a possible contact point.

Bernard reads her a highlighted advertisement from a contact magazine

Bernard *(reading)* "Calling any lost sheep. Have you been a naughty girl? Are you lonely? Unhappy? Broke? Let me look after you. Call voice mail box 2237."

Zoë Lovely. So what's the deal?

Brocklebank We'd like you to pursue it.

Zoë Just like that?

Brocklebank First of all we set you up with a comprehensive alias.

Zoë Is that necessary?

Brocklebank Yes. We want you to match the kind of thing he's looking for. He double-checks every applicant. If there's the smallest doubt about them the trail goes cold.

Zoë You mean you've tried this before?

Bernard reacts uneasily

Brocklebank (*with a glance to Bernard*) No. And secondly we need to protect your identity. In the event of us drawing a blank we don't want him tracking you down — subsequently.

Zoë You have nothing on him?

Brocklebank Not a thing — not a print, not even a whiff of DNA. The psychology people have given us a personality profile but it's sod-all use. We've got nothing except a pile of case histories.

Zoë So there I am, the bait, his ideal victim; then what happens?

Brocklebank Having established contact we'd like you to proceed to a meeting. You'd be thoroughly monitored.

Zoë Wired for sound.

Brocklebank Yes. We'd be there as close as possible to — see what happens.

Zoë Waiting for him to confess. Or for him to attack me.

Brocklebank Your safety will be our top priority.

Zoë That's a comfort. And you really think he'll buy it?

Brocklebank We reckon so.

Bernard "Where the bee sucks, there suck I / In a cowslip's bell I lie."

Brocklebank Shut up, Bernard.

Zoë Will I be armed?

Brocklebank No.

Zoë I do have a licence.

Bernard We know.

Zoë Supposing I say no.

Brocklebank We have budgeted for you to have a two-tier payment. Double your previous fee for the operation and the same again if and when the Surgeon is arrested and convicted.

Zoë Hm. Clear of tax?

Brocklebank Be reasonable — we're supposed to be the good guys.

Zoë ponders

Zoë I've got nine points on my driving licence.

Brocklebank I think Operation Tyger Tyger could run to a clean licence. Don't you, Bernard?

Zoë Operation Tyger Tyger?

Brocklebank The poem. It's his calling card. The Surgeon uses it as his trade mark. He plays games ...

Bernard "Tyger, tyger, burning bright
In the forests of the night?
What immortal hand or eye ——"

Brocklebank Thank you ...

Bernard "——Could frame thy fearful symmetry? ——"

Brocklebank (*stronger*) Thank you, Bernard. By the way, I think she may have been right about that jacket.

Zoë This isn't strictly kosher, is it?

Brocklebank There's a wee element of pork, yes.

Zoë Go on.

Brocklebank We're a very small *ad hoc* unit with a single objective. The Surgeon.

Zoë How small?

Brocklebank At the core of the operation, three.

Zoë You two and ... ?

Brocklebank DI Jerry Collingwood. We are covered by level five security.

Zoë I noticed.

Brocklebank We have access to every police resource and all data facilities.

Zoë (*re her file*) I noticed.

Brocklebank Perforce we are operating in extreme isolation.

Zoë I noticed.

Brocklebank As a consequence we are being allowed a little latitude with our approach. Isn't that right, Bernard?

Bernard nods

Zoë They're turning a blind eye.

Brocklebank The means justify the end.

Zoë The means are me — cosying up to a psychopath.

Brocklebank That's about it — yes. He must be caught. He's got to be stopped.

Zoë What sort of time frame are we on?

Brocklebank Tight. He must not be given time to claim another victim. We'd like to start work tomorrow with your prep and briefing. There's a lot to be done; the success of this operation is in the detail.

Bernard hands Zoë a fat folder. She checks it

Zoë What's this?

Brocklebank It's all you need to know about Natasha Campion. Your alias.

Zoë Who is she?

Brocklebank A drop-out from Southampton University. A loner, a loser, a crack-head desperate for funds.

Zoë Good victim material.

Brocklebank Exactly. You've done a bunk from rehab. and are on the streets.

Zoë (*looking at a photograph*) And this is her?

Brocklebank She's two years younger than you, same height, near enough the same weight — obviously not that fit. We'll have to change your hair.

Zoë Natasha Campion ... The lost sheep goes stalking the tiger ... (*She pauses*) See you tomorrow morning.

Zoë shakes hands with Brocklebank

Bernard escorts Zoë towards the exit

Bernard (as they go) “Where the bee sucks, there suck I ...”

They exit

Brocklebank produces his mobile phone, dials and then speaks into it

Brocklebank (into the telephone; quietly) Collingwood? It’s me. ... Yes. ... A very good candidate. Zoë Lang with no “i”. ... She’s volatile but we’ll just have to live with it. The training is crucial. ... Absolutely. That’s your responsibility. There will be no history repeating itself. ... *Il faut casser des oeufs pour faire une omelette*. It’s French, Collingwood. You have to break eggs to make a fucking omelette. (He laughs and then disconnects)

The Lights fade to Black-out

SCENE 2

The same. Three days later

When the scene begins the room is in darkness. Bernard and Brocklebank sit facing the video screen(s). A video of Zoë as Natasha plays on the video screen(s). She looks quite different, with changed make-up and hair

As the video proceeds, the Lights come up to reveal Bernard and Brocklebank listening and watching

Zoë (on the screen; talking into her mobile) Hi. My name is Natasha, Natasha Campion. I — er — saw your ad. Re. the lost sheep thing. And I was wondering if you could help me ... (She becomes distraught) I’ve been so stupid — and I don’t know which way to turn ... I’ve made such a mess of everything ... Sorry. I’ve got a mobile you could call me on, but no address ... 0751 554 4432. ... I don’t expect you’ll call back anyway. (She sobs brilliantly) Bye. (She disconnects. Very brightly, to the camera) Was that pathetic enough for you, Bernard? Has it brought a lump to your throat? Throat ... (She giggles)

Brocklebank turns off the recorder/video machine with a remote control

Brocklebank She’s good. She’s very good. Poor little Natasha. Downtrodden and weebegone.

Bernard Still no response though.

Brocklebank It's been what, three days? He'll call. How could he not, with bait like that?

Bernard I hope he's not checking her out just yet. Not too thoroughly. How is she doing?

Brocklebank With the prep. and training? Very well, there's a lot of it, mind. She's not quite ready. Where is she?

Bernard (*picking up the very distinctive file*) Have you been through this with her yet, the Uncle Gareth stuff?

Brocklebank No. Do we need to? Does she have to be put through all that?

Bernard It's why she's here. It's what gives her that edge.

Brocklebank The old iron in the soul syndrome? (*Reading the file*) Gareth Brodie ... Six years wasn't enough. They should have put him away for life ... Let's leave it. What's the point in using it?

Bernard Because it is the darkest secret she guards. It is a memory she has spent twelve years in therapy trying to wipe.

Brocklebank (*referring to the file*) And four days facing the bastard across the courtroom ...

Bernard Her psychiatrist's report should be sacrosanct. We need to see how she'd react.

Brocklebank Why?

Bernard It's where she's weak. It could break her.

Brocklebank It's too brutal.

Bernard That's the whole idea.

Brocklebank Not yet. She's not that resilient.

Bernard Then let's abandon the whole plan.

Brocklebank No. We've got to go ahead.

Bernard Regardless?

Brocklebank Do you have a problem with that?

Bernard I wonder how Canute felt as the waves reached his feet. Was it only his face he thought of saving?

Brocklebank You are as mad as a snake, Bernard.

Bernard There's a girl's life at stake. And this time, my friend, you will be held accountable.

Brocklebank I don't need reminding, Bernard.

Bernard This time there will be no doctoring of the truth. No sweepings under the departmental carpet.

Brocklebank That's already been agreed.

Bernard Collingwood knows what's happening, then?

Brocklebank Yes, yes, yes.

Bernard Are you sure?

Brocklebank Of course. How could he not?

Bernard And you trust him?

Brocklebank That goes without saying.

Bernard Say it anyway — for me.

Brocklebank For God's sake, Bernard. Collingwood is solid. OK?

Bernard Solid? How solid, why solid?

Brocklebank I *have* him OK. The details are under lock and key.

Bernard turns the camera on Brocklebank and switches on. We see Brocklebank's troubled face in close-up on the screen for all the following

Bernard Let's make this official shall we?

Brocklebank (*into the camera*) As you wish.

Bernard (*as a voice-over for the camera*) She should have had the Red Code File.

Brocklebank No. There is no need. Not yet.

Bernard And I still say it was an error of judgement not telling Zoë about Caroline Bryce.

Brocklebank It's not relevant. Caroline hadn't been tested under stress. She had no experience with role playing. We were outmanoeuvred, out-played.

Bernard This isn't a game.

Brocklebank I think to him it is.

Bernard What we have here is a maniac killing young girls. Remember that.

Brocklebank Whoops! Silly me, I nearly forgot. (*He flares up*) I screwed up, I know that, Bernard. Caroline was working directly under my instruction and still he got her. Just like that, from under our noses ... I wake up in the night remembering it, hearing his voice, that evil synthetic bloody voice.

Bernard The voice of Damocles. I thought we were working on a need-to-know basis.

Brocklebank We are. Zoë doesn't need to know Caroline was a police agent. Soon we'll catch the bastard and that will be that, OK? And I for one will be able to sleep quietly. A nice long quiet sleep.

Bernard Good; and in the meantime, I'm merely registering a demur?

Brocklebank A demur, Bernard?

Bernard About your *modus operandus*.

Brocklebank What the hell do you know?

Bernard I know the rules. And I'm watching you. Remember that.

Brocklebank (*blocking the camera lens*) Turn that thing off. Listen, you may not like me, Bernard, I can live with that. I don't like you a great deal either. We have to work together, all right?

Bernard turns the camera on himself. We see his face now, in close-up, huge on the screen

Bernard I'm sorry to hear I'm not your type. All I'm doing is registering my concern — my reservations. (*He switches the camera off*)

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