Acting Edition

THE BILLIONAIRE INSIDE YOUR HEAD

by Will Lord

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SAMUEL FRENCH

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NOTE

This edition reflects a rehearsal draft of the script and may differ from the final production.

THE BILLIONAIRE INSIDE YOUR HEAD was first performed at Hampstead Theatre Downstairs, London, on 19 September 2025. The cast and creative team were as follows:

RICHIE . . . . . Nathan Clarke
DARWIN . . . . . Ashley Margolis
NICOLE/THE VOICE . . . . . Allison McKenzie

Writer . . . . . Will Lord
Director . . . . . Anna Ledwich
Designer . . . . . Janet Bird
Lighting Designer . . . . . James Whiteside
Sound Designer . . . . . Max Pappenheim
Fight and Intimacy Directors . . . . . Bethan Clark and Robin Helier
Stage Manager . . . . . Em Cox

CHARACTERS

RICHIE – early/mid-twenties.

DARWIN – early/mid-twenties. Also portrays **STEPHANIE**, mid-twenties.

NICOLE – late forties/early fifties. Darwin's mother and Richie's boss.

THE VOICE – lives inside Richie's head. Played by the same actor as Nicole.

SETTING

The play mostly takes place in Richie & Darwin's basement office. The basement is a decaying, forgotten file room, the kind with a precariously dangling exposed lightbulb. Several huge filing cabinets adorn the space. Several health and safety laws are probably being broken by allowing them to work there.

Nicole's office and house should feel more modern and polished than the basement. Not a hair out of place.

The Voice's scenes take place in a liminal space, more imagined than defined.

TIME

Present day.

NOTES ON TEXT

‘ on its own line denotes a pause.

/ at the end of a line denotes two characters speaking over each other.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As I write this, we're one week into rehearsals with the Hampstead Theatre and an amazing company, and I am so grateful to all of them for trusting in this odd little play and helping make it into something real.

There are many others without whom this play wouldn't exist and all of them deserve a huge thank you. Firstly, countless very patient English teachers who never got as irritated as they could've with me, much appreciated.

To the friends and other writers who read numerous drafts and gave their very kind and vital feedback, thank you so much. Thank you also to my agent Kelly for being a wonderful collaborator and really believing in this.

This play was initially developed on the London Library Emerging Writers' programme, and a huge thank you goes to them for supporting new writing and letting me use their building and archive to work on basically whatever I wanted for a year. Which seems insane in hindsight.

Thank you to Jo, for telling me to write this play and insisting, despite my protesting to the contrary, that it was worth doing. I guess you might've had a point.

And last but definitely not least thank you to my parents. Not just for the whole creating me thing (very important) but also being lovely inspiring people and being all nice about the writing stuff. Thanks!!

Two books that really helped me as I was trying to write this and might be of interest to anyone who enjoyed this play are *The Man Who Couldn't Stop* by David Adam, and *The Will To Change* by bell hooks.

On average, it takes people seventeen years after the onset of their symptoms to receive an effective diagnosis and treatment for OCD. It took me eighteen to even mention it to anyone, or realise there was something unusual about the way my brain worked. So if something in this play resonated with you a little too much for comfort, it might be worth bringing it up to someone. I promise it will help.

Prologue

*(**THE VOICE** bounds on with the energy of an 80s Zumba teacher. She is fully aware of us. Curious and excited, like a child who enjoys plucking the wings off flies.)*

THE VOICE. Well I don't like how you're all staring at me.

That's a bit rude, isn't it. I'm not used to being looked at. Not sure I like it.

,

And you're really looking at *all* of me, aren't you? Up and down.

Shameless.

,

But get your shit together now, come on. I'm not used to being looked at, I'm used to being *listened to.*

Why don't you look at each other instead. Go on – I'm not kidding. Look at each other. Find someone across the room. Someone you don't know. Look them in the eyes. Now don't blink away, try and hold their gaze. "Ooh it's awkward!" I know, but just *try*, okay?

,

Well have you found someone now? Good. Keep looking at them. Now, answer nice and quick and out loud.

Would you fuck them?

Oh don't be childish about it, come on. Would you fuck them? It's a simple yes/no question.

Not right now – I mean feel free, but I think we'd all rather you stayed in your seats – but more hypothetically. At any point in your life, if the circumstances were to align, and it's on the table. Maybe it's on an actual table.

Would you fuck them?

,

I can sense some resistance to answering this question. But I've given you long enough to stare at them by now, haven't I? You've had a good look. Haven't you made up your mind?

What, now you've got to say it out loud you're all fucking shy? Come on, don't pretend you weren't thinking about it before I even asked. Staring at a stranger… little bit of you going "Nice". Or perhaps "Ugh". Don't pretend you weren't thinking about it looking at me. Looking at all of me. Looking me up and down and clearly not fucking *listening*.

Let's try it a different way. Look at your person. *Look* at them. Now imagine. It's five years in the future. If you're with someone now, sorry, they're dead. Or they started having a *lot* of 'yoga' sessions with Enrique and stopped coming home. I don't care. They're gone. You… are available.

You're in a bar. Or a library. Or maybe a vape shop? However people meet these days. Anyway. This person in front of you walks up and introduces themselves. They've been looking at you, you see. From across the bar, nursing their gin & tonic. Or their copy of *War & Peace*. Or their cherry mango Elf Bar.

And they wanted to say hi.

Now before you know it, you've been chatting for hours. You have so much in common. Or maybe you don't – maybe that excites you. But the bar's closing. The librarian's giving you a disapproving glare. The vape shop's being raided by police because it's a money

laundering front because obviously it is because who goes to vape shops.

This person – the one you're supposed to be looking at – gives you a little touch on your arm. Maybe you've been out of the game for a while, but you know what that means.

So here we are. You've connected, you've found each other as two lost souls in the terrifying storm of life blah blah blah whatever. But at the end of the day you are fucking primates looking to continue your gene pool and you need to be *physically* attracted to someone. So look at the curves of their face. The curves of the rest of them. The clothes they're wearing. The kind of person you've assumed they are.

...so would you?

,

You understand I'm not asking you anything you haven't thought about before? It's all inside your head. I promise it is. Burning, folding, spinning. Would I fuck her, would I kill him, should I tell them I don't love them anymore. Will I ever find anyone or will I be alone forever? Will I ever be happy with myself? Am I destined for greatness or am I going to die alone in a ditch with nobody but hungry foxes to remember the taste of me?

Everything you want from your stupid little lives, everything you're afraid to want and afraid to say you want and afraid to even want to say...

It's all inside your head. And you've got to let me help you get it out. Because if you don't get it out I can promise you won't leave any mark on this world but vapid, empty breath.

So, for once in your lives, *listen.* When you lock eyes with someone, and I ask you if you'd fuck them...*give me an answer.*

,

Now I know some of you still feel 'a bit awkward'. "Oh no I feel like I'm judging this person unfairly that I've never met, it's rude to objectify people, isn't this harassment" Blah blah blah. "What if I don't want to say?"

What if you don't want to say? Then I'll have to decide for you.

(Now her demeanour changes. Her temperature drops. She's ready to pluck off some wings.)

Maybe I'll make you have sex with them. Maybe you'll have to. Maybe you'll find yourself under them, disgusted, knowing that all you had to do to avoid this was to fucking say what you want.

,

Or maybe…maybe I'll make them your soulmate. Your one true love. God, it's magical isn't it? They're everything you ever dreamed of. You're so deliriously happy – they've given your life meaning again. You won't die alone. You're not a pointless, fleeting speck of dust. You're in *looooooove*.

But when you lie them down on your bed, and you lean in for that perfect kiss on those perfect lips, thinking of everything you could do to each other…you stop. They're confused – "is everything alright honey?" But you don't move. And you don't say anything. Because you know, deep down. You remember this moment, when you didn't say, and you *know*.

That I won't ever let you fuck them. *Ever.*

,

Tell me, how's that sound?

(Blackout.)

1.

(The basement is a decaying, forgotten file room, the kind with a precariously dangling exposed lightbulb.)

(Several huge filing cabinets sit behind their desks, looming. They will often be searched for a particular file, but the right one will never, ever be found.)

*(***RICHIE** *and* **DARWIN** *are sitting at their desks.* **RICHIE** *is, ostensibly, working through a file.* **DARWIN** *smokes a large joint. He does not offer it to* **RICHIE**. *They are mid-argument.)*

RICHIE. – I'm just saying there's a work ethic there, right. No matter what position he's in now he's worked his arse off to get there. His family wasn't rich –

DARWIN. Piss off his family wasn't rich. They owned an *emerald mine.*

Have you seen the the Paulsen file?

*(***RICHIE** *looks around but shakes his head.* **DARWIN** *searches his desk.)*

RICHIE. I know it sounds bad but an emerald mine in South Africa then didn't cost that much. You think emerald mine you think supervillain private island but actually it was an ordinary middle-class business investment, like a second home.

DARWIN. What, "darling shall we pop down to the mine this weekend?"

(Back looking for the file.) It was right here…

*(***RICHIE** *chuckles.* **DARWIN** *looks at the papers in front of him.)*

Actually do you want to take this one? Paulsen. It sounds boring as shite. Go on. I bet you can find it too.

RICHIE. What? No, I've just started mine. Anyway you know we can't swap the ones we're allocated. It looks bad.

DARWIN. Who cares?

RICHIE. Easy for you to say mate.

DARWIN. What's that mean?

(Beat. **RICHIE** *shakes his head, grinning.)*

Oh come on you love this complex maths shit, it'll do my head in. I want a nice simple trail and an address.

RICHIE. It wouldn't do your head in if you weren't stoned every morning.

DARWIN. I'm not stoned, I'm invulnerable. It's my version of coffee. You're allowed a drug in the morning why can't I?

Come on pleaaaaase swap.

RICHIE. Nooooope.

*(***DARWIN** *sighs and begins to search for the Paulsen file in the filing cabinets.)*

DARWIN. Well, most people don't have second homes. However much it cost it's an advantage –

RICHIE. I know most people don't but lots of people do and they don't all go on to become the richest man in the world do they?! I'm just saying *clearly* there's something special about him –

DARWIN. And I'm just saying stop trying to suck his dick/

RICHIE. Just because his family wasn't living in a slum doesn't mean he doesn't deserve everything he's earned/

DARWIN. Stop trying to suck his dick. Stop trying to suck his weird pasty apartheid-Clyde jewel-mining dick and where the fuck is this file?!

RICHIE. Just because they were white doesn't mean they benefitted that much from –

(Off **DARWIN***'s look.)* Okay fine but –

DARWIN. Just because he makes a few cars that literally *catch fire* doesn't mean he's the pinnacle of human civilisation, also isn't he basically a Nazi now?

RICHIE. I know he has gone a bit off the deep end, but –

DARWIN. A bit?! You sound like a fucking incel, stop trying to suck –

RICHIE. You know that's actually quite homophobic of you, just because I *admire* another man's *drive* doesn't mean I want to suck his dick.

(Beat. They both grin.)

Now if you'll excuse me, I need to find the last known address of Mister Tommy Fox because he now owes your Mum…

(He checks the file and whistles softly.)

A cool ten grand. Damn.

(Beat.)

DARWIN. Ay don't say it like that though.

RICHIE. Like what?

DARWIN. Like he "owes my Mum" like she's fucking Wonga.com. It wasn't her who lent him money. She's just…

RICHIE. How would you put it?

DARWIN. I don't know, like we're stuck in an asbestos looking basement chasing down people who probably don't exist anymore. I don't even understand how you can buy debt.

RICHIE. We went over this, it's sold as pennies to the pound that's why all those suits invested in it because the profit margins are unbelievable –

DARWIN. BUT IT'S SO BOOORING.

RICHIE. Ey isn't it fun to have a baller for a Mum now though?

*(***DARWIN** *looks a bit uncomfortable.* **RICHIE** *goes back to his file.* **DARWIN** *continues searching, fruitlessly. Eventually he gives up, slams the cabinet closed.)*

(He's bored now. He ambles round **RICHIE**. *Gives him a poke.)*

Nah man I actually gotta finish this. Unlike you I care about my performance targets.

DARWIN. Come oooon it's only eleven a.m.!

*(***DARWIN** *pokes him again. No reaction.)*

RICHIE. For real man, let me finish.

(Beat. **DARWIN** *reaches out and 'grabs'* **RICHIE***'s nose, poking his thumb through his fingers as the 'nose'.)*

Did you just got-your-nose me?

DARWIN. I did.

RICHIE. Are you twelve?

DARWIN. Apparently.

*(**DARWIN** bursts out laughing. **RICHIE** laughs too, but it seems a little forced.)*

Now what are we thinking for lunch? I read there's a new meal deal selection at Tesco if you wanna give it the official inspection.

*(**RICHIE** says nothing. Beat. **DARWIN** stops – sensing something's slightly off.)*

What?

RICHIE. Nah, nothing.

,

Just erm…

Can I…can I have my nose back?

(Beat.)

DARWIN. What?

RICHIE. Nose. Can I have my nose back?

DARWIN. Your nose.

RICHIE. Yeah, you did the thing… you took it off –

(Beat.)

DARWIN. It's on your face mate.

RICHIE. No I know it is, I know it's there, I just…I just need you to put it back, I know it's weird, I know I'm being…

DARWIN. Is this one of your…one of your things?

RICHIE. I guess. I dunno, maybe/

DARWIN. Cos I remember this, I remember this from when we were at school you used to do this/

*(**DARWIN** starts to crack up.)*

DARWIN. I promise I didn't actually rip it off your face –

RICHIE. No I know man, I know it's not real/

DARWIN. There'd be blood everywhere, it wouldn't be pretty/

RICHIE. I know it's really still there, I just need you to put it back. Okay? Please.

*(**DARWIN** snorts. Beat. Then he shrugs and mimes putting **RICHIE**'s nose back.)*

No, you dropped it, remember?

DARWIN. What now?

RICHIE. It's not in your hand. When you stopped holding it, you dropped it.

*(**DARWIN** is nonplussed. After a beat **RICHIE** points to the floor.)*

It's over there right?

*(Beat. **DARWIN** looks at the empty floor.)*

DARWIN. Right. Guess it is.

*(**DARWIN** bends down and picks up the 'nose', putting his thumb between his fingers. He brushes dirt off it, straight-faced, then slowly slots it back onto **RICHIE**'s face.)*

RICHIE. Thanks.

*(A long beat. Then **DARWIN** bursts out laughing hysterically.)*

DARWIN. Mate you have got to stop this shit now. You're like, in your twenties.

RICHIE. You're the one who got-your-nosed me!!

DARWIN. My childhood regression is charming and endearing! Yours is just being fucking weird all the time.

(Beat. Laughing too, **RICHIE** *leaps up, eager to change the subject.)*

RICHIE. Right, you're bored? You know what we need to do.

DARWIN. What?

*(***RICHIE** *starts enthusiastically doing star-jumps.)*

DARWIN. You know what I just said about being a weirdo.

RICHIE. Trust. You just need to get your endorphins flowing, your energy up, then you'll be motivated to grind out the rest of the day. It's a *performance catalyst*.

DARWIN. Why do I get the feeling this is what your best pal Elon does?

RICHIE. It doesn't have to be long. Jack Dorsey just does a seven-minute workout in the morning. Gets the brain pumping.

DARWIN. Who is Jack Horsey?

*(***RICHIE** *stops.)*

RICHIE. Founder of Twitter. Sorry –

(He crosses his arms like this guy: 🤷)

'X'. Look, it's work. It doesn't matter if you don't love reading files, you gotta smash it anyway.

(Off **DARWIN***'s look.)*

Okay fine, let's make it more...

(He grabs his phone and puts on music – "I Got Ants In My Pants (And I Need To Dance)" by James Brown. He moves in a surprisingly assured two-step. Hips swinging. No finger-guns-straight-man-at-the-club dancing here.)*

RICHIE. Come on, do you trust me? I know you do. You know the Godfather wants you to dance.

(Under pressure, **DARWIN** *sighs and starts to dance too, a little more stilted. Maybe they fall into a two-step together, side to side.)*

Yeaaaah that's right. Get every part of your body moving.

James Brown. Hardest working man in show business. You know he drilled his band so tight if they made a mistake during a show, he'd hear it and hold up his fingers, and that's how much he'd dock their salary. Missed a dance move? Twenty-five bucks. Messed up the end of a song? Fifty dollars.

DARWIN. That's pretty brutal.

RICHIE. Maybe. But you end up with a groove this good... might be worth it.

(He spins round.)

Can you feel it yet?

*(***DARWIN** *laughs and smiles.)*

DARWIN. You know what, a little.

RICHIE. You feel ready to chase down some DEBTS?

DARWIN. I guess.

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RICHIE. Nah come on say it with me. Yell it. They can't hear upstairs. ARE YOU READY?!

DARWIN. Yeah!

RICHIE. LOUDER!

DARWIN. YEAH!

RICHIE. *(Beating his chest in time.)* FUCK YEAH?

DARWIN. FUCK YEAH!

(They both beat their chest, hollering. **RICHIE** *pulls a surprised* **DARWIN** *in for a hug, slapping his back. Holding him there.* **DARWIN** *struggles a bit. Maybe he protests to let him go. Maybe he just squirms. After a little, he wriggles free and stands apart.)*

DARWIN. Alright, alright.

RICHIE. Alright. Now you're working like a fucking winner.

(They both settle down to their desks. After a few seconds, they look at each other and burst out laughing.)

(Blackout.)

2.

(A clean office, many floors higher than the decaying basement. **RICHIE** *seated.* **NICOLE** *comes in, talking quietly on her AirPods. She may look identical to* **THE VOICE**, *but she's from another planet. Business-focused. Gives nothing away. Every smile is stillborn behind the eyes.)*

(She gives a 'one moment' gesture to **RICHIE**. *He gives an enthusiastic thumbs up.* **NICOLE** *slaps a file down on the desk and turns her back.* **RICHIE** *notices – presumably his file. He strains to read it but it's too far. He slaps his thighs a little nervously.)*

(Then he looks at **NICOLE**. *Looks her up and down.)*

RICHIE. *(Murmuring.)* Yeah.

,

Yeah, I'd fuck her.

*(***NICOLE** *turns, a 'did you say something' expression on her face.* **RICHIE** *shakes his head – 'nothing'.* **NICOLE** *finishes the call and hangs up.)*

NICOLE. Sorry about that, Rich. Welcome, welcome.

*(***RICHIE** *jumps up and shakes her hand enthusiastically.)*

RICHIE. Yeah, thanks for having me, up in the penthouse…

(They both sit.)

You know it's actually been ages. You should come visit our basement kingdom sometime.

NICOLE. Oh really? It's a long trip down. What is it, forty floors?

RICHIE. We've decorated though, it's quite the palace now yeah

NICOLE. Tell me you haven't made it some kind of man cave.

RICHIE. *(Laughing.)* Nah nah just a proper productive work environment. Promise!

NICOLE. Good because I remember Darwin's room and I cannot be near that smell ever again. Teenage boys, I swear. And you had that *horrific* deodorant. Didn't your Mum ever complain?

*(***RICHIE** *laughs and shakes his head.)*

Well her nose must've been blocked. Shall we get on with it?

RICHIE. Yeah I just wanted to say how gr–

NICOLE. *(Cutting him off.)* Wait wait, let me do my spiel.

*(***RICHIE** *nods, grinning.)*

We do these every six months. Nothing to worry about, just a little chat to make sure everyone's achieving their personal goals, hitting performance targets. Checking everyone's still a fit for the team.

So.

(She opens the file – with a grin, like 'look at how ridiculous this is'.)

We've been really impressed with your progress, Rich. Genuinely.

RICHIE. Thanks Nicole. Thank you.

NICOLE. Really impressed. Client tracing isn't easy, but it seems to be to you. It's a bit like being thrown in at the deep end –

RICHIE. But I like being thrown in at the deep end!

NICOLE. Clearly. You've made massive strides forward and honestly, that's about it. No feedback. Keep doing you.

*(***RICHIE** *smiles, nods.)*

The other thing is that I wanted to give you a cheeky heads up. There's going to be some…restructuring coming up, and as part of that we're recruiting for a new Junior Associate.

Now we'd really like to train someone up internally, if you get my meaning. It's a big step up, but a big opportunity. So we're going to invite all six of you Researchers to apply later this week.

But I wanted to let you know now. Our…little secret, if you like.

RICHIE. Wow. Yeah, fuck yeah, sorry… I'm in.

Big raise?

NICOLE. Careful!

(She leans forward conspiratorially.)

But yes it is.

RICHIE. Nicole thank you, honestly I'm so grateful for this.

NICOLE. Course. You forget Rich, I've known you since you were in nappies. I know what your potential is. And this is a role we really need to go to the *right* person.

RICHIE. Totally. And like, you know I'm a hard worker. Really. I'll put in the hours, late nights, early mornings. A lot of people in my generation just wanna phone it in –

NICOLE. You talking about my son?

RICHIE. *(Laughing.)* No! No, not D but… you know people don't have the graft anymore. They don't have what you had.

NICOLE. Oh, and what did I have?

RICHIE. You knew where you wanted to be and you understood how hard you had to fucking grind until you got there. Right?

NICOLE. True.

RICHIE. I wanna run my own, my own company yeah, but I know it's gonna be sleepless nights and rejections and nothing nothing nothing until it finally pays off. And I'm ready, I'm committed to that.

And really Nicole I don't know if I ever said this to you but you're such an, an inspiration to me –

NICOLE. That's very sweet of you, Rich.

RICHIE. Nah but seriously, like as a businesswoman, everything you overcame to get here, all that adversity and you didn't even blink.

NICOLE. Adversity?

RICHIE. Well yeah I just, I imagine it wasn't easy, being a a woman, at that time, must've been... I can't imagine how difficult it was.

NICOLE. You can imagine or you can't imagine?

(Beat.)

RICHIE. I just mean like, I dunno. It must've been hard to... you had Darwin so young and you were still just starting out, maybe it was...hard to be taken seriously

NICOLE. You think I'm hard to take seriously?

RICHIE. No! No, the opposite, I was fucking terrified of you as a kid –

NICOLE. So I'm terrifying.

RICHIE. Fuck, sorry, no.

I just mean it's inspiring like back then you didn't have much and you were a woman and...and I imagine

there's a lot of shit that comes with that, but you didn't let it get you down. I mean you never had help or a nanny or anything and it weren't like Darwin's dad was...

Like I remember when it first took off you started picking Darwin up wearing those grey business suits with the blazers cos you'd just come from meetings and...

*(***NICOLE** *raises her eyebrows and* **RICHIE** *tails off, unsure what point he was trying to make.)*

Sorry.

*(***NICOLE** *smiles. She starts packing up the file and stands.)*

NICOLE. Thanks for coming up.

RICHIE. Nicole can I ask actually, who was *your* inspiration? Like when you got started, who did you look up to?

(Beat.)

NICOLE. I'm late for a meeting, Rich.

(Blackout.)

3.

(The basement. **RICHIE** *sipping his morning coffee.* **DARWIN** *finishing his morning joint.)*

DARWIN. You're serious?

RICHIE. Swear down, she was all "I want a man who provides for me".

DARWIN. On a first date?

RICHIE. Bro, within ten minutes.

DARWIN. What did you say?

RICHIE. I leaned right in, I said "if you play your cards right tonight, I'll *provide* you anything you want." Then I signal the waitress real casual like –

(He holds up his hand nonchalantly.)

And she's right there and I'm like "starting with two glasses of red" you know red's got that bougie vibe right and I even pick one out from the menu. Said I'd had it before. Said I liked the tannins.

DARWIN. Alright, alright I see you!

What are tannins?

RICHIE. No idea.

(They laugh.)

DARWIN. Smooth. And she's looking good?

RICHIE. She's beautiful. But I'm not there for that right I'm there for long term. Like, is there a future here?

DARWIN. Oh sure you are, you're all, "I just wanna get to know your personality" –

RICHIE. You wanna hear this story or not?

WAIT, THERE'S MORE!

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