

crackers – 4M | 9F | 1Any

With the possibility of some doubling.

Will – a GP – 40s / 50s. Super smart, dedicated to his job, loves his family completely.

Mhairi – his wife, a teacher – 40s / 50s. Endlessly kind.

Lyra – their daughter – 17 / 18. Finishing school and terrified of the change.

Cherry – her girlfriend – 17 / 18. Can't wait to start adult life.

Young Lyra – 11 / 12. Curious. Anxious.

Imogen – Will's friend – 40s / 50s. An adventurer. Dreads settling.

Faith – Ben's mum – 30s / 40s / 50s. Values justice.

Kathleen – a support worker – 50s / 60s. Pottering along.

Josh – a teacher – 30s / 40s / 50s. Loves the wrong person

Ernie – a teacher – 50s / 60s / 70s.

Patient 1 – either gender, 30s / 40s, a veteran.

Patient 2 – female, 50s / 60s / 70s.

Patient 3 – male, 50s / 60s / 70s.

Interviewer – female.

Doctor's surgery. (Faith / Will)

Faith: I've not really been sleeping.

Will: Right. Because of work? What happens when you try and sleep? Overactive mind? Hot and bothered?

Faith: I'm a bit young for the menopause, Doctor Campbell.

Will: So when you try and sleep, you just – what? Can't?

Faith: I keep falling asleep. During the day? The other day, we met Amazon. They were trying to be sincere. I worry about driving.

Will: You're falling asleep. Then what?

Faith: I – dream. Then I can't get back -

Will: You wake up and then –

Faith: My heart. Thudding so hard I can hear it.

Will: It's so light at this time of year.

Faith: Could I have sleeping tablets?

Will: There are things we'd try first. Are you taking any exercise?

Faith: Ten miles every night. Hour and twenty. Please give me sleeping tablets. I tried herbal ones. Piece of shit.

Will: What's keeping you awake, Faith?

Faith: I wake up. That blissful moment when everything's ok. All in bed. Safe. That feels like a long time ago. My babies in their beds. Then I remember they're not and I can't –

Will: They're not what?

Faith: My son died.

Will: I'm so sorry.

Faith: My eldest. I lie there staring into the dark, willing him to be there, crouched in the corner, hiding in the wardrobe, something – somehow I missed him - this massive misunderstanding - and all I can think about is what he was thinking when he –

Will: When he died?

Faith: He killed himself. My son killed himself. Have you ever had to say that, Doctor Campbell? You haven't, have you?

Seventeen years old. A baby. But so smart. On track for – for all it fucking matters - I was so proud.

Will: Faith, I understand why you think sleeping pills would help. They might help for a little while. When did it -?

Faith: Three months ago.

Will: You'll have a lot of feelings, emotions, swimming round in your head. You'll be angry.

Faith: You don't fucking say.

Will: Sleeping pills should make the nights easier, in the short term. Have you spoken to anyone? Anyone qualified?

Faith: Could they bring him back?

Will: It helps some people.

Faith: I don't like talking about it. I don't like thinking about it. I don't like – I hate saying it.

Will: Of course not. That's natural. Particularly when someone –

Faith: I found him in the fucking garage. *(She cries.)*

Sorry. Wasting your time.

Will: This is your time too. Crying is good. Healthy. It helps lots of people.

Faith: It doesn't change anything.

Will: It's not about changing anything. I'm so sorry, Faith. We can't change anything. But you can give your body, your mind, time and space to catch up. To realise you can get out of bed tomorrow and stagger through another day. I promise you won't spend the rest of your life waking up, thinking he's still here.

Faith: What happens when his bed doesn't smell of him anymore?

Will: You'll always have the years you had with him.

Faith: I remember how he feels. In my arms. The best hugs – boys don't usually – you know? His hair smell. Head and shoulders and him. I can't let - it hurts too –

Will: You won't believe me now but in time, you'll remember him slamming the door, furious the fridge is empty – and it won't hurt so much when you send him away again – or run ten miles 'til you're too tired to let him in.

Faith: You're being so nice.

Will: It's my job.

Faith: It's just - he came to see you.

Will: Who?

Faith: Benjy.

Will: Who?

Faith: Ben. My son.

Will: What do you mean?

Faith: Before he died.

Will: I. What?

Faith: A week before. He - he said he'd been feeling – he didn't have words. All this wellbeing bullshit at school. And he still couldn't –

Odd, he tried. Distant. Like he was underwater. He said he'd been to a – been to you. Embarrassed to – he'd been to our GP since he was a baby, you know?

So he came here. Said you had a good name. Doctor William Campbell. He thought you'd help.

Will: I don't remember. I don't remember seeing him.

Home. (Cherry / Lyra)

Lyra: *(On her phone for much of this.)* Two. More. Days.

Cherry: I cannot wait.

Lyra: I'm shitting it.

Cherry: Are you actually?

Lyra: Don't you know me better than anyone?

Cherry: Freedom? No dad hanging over you all the time?

Lyra: Maybe I need him hanging over me.

Cherry: Making you feel inadequate when you "only" get 98%?

Lyra: Maybe I wouldn't get anything done if he didn't.

Cherry: You're just up the road.

Lyra: Aberdeen? Quite a long road.

Lyra tugs at her hair. Cherry notices.

Cherry: You can come back at weekends.

Lyra: That'll be great for my social life. Even less friends.

Cherry: You'll have billions of friends. This little squish?

Lyra: I just – what it's going to be like? What if I'm too scared to go out? Like if everything's online, maybe that's *(ok)* – but what if I can't do the work? Can't work. Can't look after myself. Mum knows me. You too. You know if I'm – *(Hair tug)*

Cherry: So do you though. Wait *(tries to get her to put phone down)*, look at me -

Lyra: I can't always say.

Cherry: Promise you will. And call me, any time, visit, any time –

Lyra: When you're busy in the army?

Cherry: RAF.

Lyra: Same difference. *(Hair tug)*

Cherry: What are you looking at? *(She means the phone.)*

Lyra: Nothing. *(Puts phone down.)*

Cherry: Lyra, tell me something.

Lyra: What?

Cherry: Do I not love you?

Lyra: No-one loves me.

Cherry: With all my heart?

Lyra: Until the stars burn out?

Cherry: That was low.

Lyra: Sorry.

Cherry: Lyla, I'm going to miss you. So much. I can't even imagine -

Lyra: It's alright for you. You can't wait to go.

Cherry: Swapping one uniform for another?

Lyra: You love new things.

Cherry: I hate the thought of being away from you.

Lyra: You'll drop me in a heartbeat for some other woman in uniform.

Home. (Young Lyra, Will)

Young Lyra: Can you fix heads, Daddy?

Will: It depends, love.

Young Lyra: What on?

Will: If it's a cut or a bump, I'd have a go. If it's messy, they might need to go to hospital.

Young Lyra: And get a plaster?

Will: Maybe. Why are you asking, Lylo?

Young Lyra: George shut his fingers in the door again.

Will: He needs to learn to be more careful, doesn't he?

Young Lyra: He can't help it. It's his dyslexia.

Will: Dyspraxia, darling. He can learn to judge that better.

Young Lyra: He can learn to get better?

Will: Sure. And there's lots we can do to help.

Young Lyra: Can you always learn to get better, Daddy?

Will: Most of the time.

Young Lyra: What if a person feels sad all the time?

Will: Everyone feels sad some of the time.

Young Lyra: But if it's all the time? Can they learn to be happy again?

Home. Late. (Imogen / Will)

Imogen: He looked like a geek so you thought he can't have depression?

Will: Yes.

Imogen: William Campbell, men don't go to the doctor about this stuff. If a guy walks in, says he's feeling a bit down, all the alarm bells. Do you know how long it takes my male soldiers to open up? Most of them have seen more carnage than we'll ever. And they feel like they've failed if they say they feel depressed. You must know this -

Will: I don't see many men with depression. Any -

Imogen: What is it with GPs and mental health? You can't see the neural pathways humming and fizzing, doing their thing, so it doesn't exist? Will, what's my job?

Will: Veterans. Rehabilitation.

Imogen: How? By opening up their heads and digging in with a scalpel?

Will: She found him in the garage.

Imogen: He hung himself.

Will: How did you - ?

Imogen: It's what boys do. Though I don't know, William. Check your facts. Last I heard, geeks are too busy in the library to kill themselves -

Will: Why would he do that, Imo? Why hang himself? Seventeen. Still in school. This lovely mother. He's not a veteran. Not poor. No substance abuse.

Imogen: Do you have any imagination?

Will: What? Yes.

Imogen: I'm not sure you do.

Will: But why would he be depressed?

Imogen: Million dollar question, William. Christ, maybe all you deserve is COPD. Do you remember anything from med school?

Will: Depression is a common and serious illness that negatively affects how you feel.

Imogen: A complex not fully understood neurological condition that can occur without any triggers. Did you ask him?

Will: He looked normal.

Imogen: Luckily, all my psychos look a bit One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest.

Will: I had ten minutes with him, Imo.

Imogen: Fucking NHS.

Imogen: Will, depression, anxiety, are they not pretty common in your practice?

Will: All the rage. Waiting lists are through the roof and we're meant to fix it. Much easier if we chuck pills at them and hope they go away.

Imogen: You didn't even do that though, did you?

Will: Please, Imo -

Imogen: You're stubborn as a mule.

Will: I was just – wrong.

Imogen: What?

Will: I fucked up.

Imogen: That is the first time I have ever heard you –

Will: And now a boy is dead. This woman's son is dead.

Imogen: Boys die. Plenty more where that one came from –

Will: He'd be finishing school this week.

Imogen: Think of the reduced carbon footprint.

Will: You don't care about anything, do you?

Imogen: I care about –

Will: What?

Imogen: Drinking. You can't care about everything. You'd go mad.

Will: I miss you.

Imogen: Bollocks.

Will: It's true. I miss you.

Imogen: You miss me telling you off?

Will: / Don't believe me then.

Imogen: / Surely Mhairi does that all the time.

Will: I miss how you don't give a fuck. I need to do more of that.

Imogen: I'm sure your dead boy's mum thinks you nailed it.

Will: A low blow.

Imogen: A low blow. But I am low, Will. Had you forgotten?

Will: I fucking miss you.

Imogen: Cheer up, William. It might never happen.

Will: That's what I'm afraid of.

He moves towards her. Are they going to kiss?

Home. Bit later. (Mhairi / Will)

Mhairi: Oh my god, she hates me. I totally betrayed her trust.

Will: Know how she feels.

Mhairi: That's totally different.

Will: How?

Mhairi: She didn't want you to know.

Will: That's for better or worse? Your daughter telling you what to do?

Mhairi: You sent Ben away.

Will: I thought we were in this together.

Mhairi: So did I.

Will: Then why didn't you - ?

Mhairi: Will, you've been here all the time I have. You're the bloody doctor! You're meant to know about these things.

Will: I thought I did.

Mhairi: She asked me not to tell you. She made me promise. I did try - to tell you not tell you – you know? But you never took the bloody hint!

Will: I could have helped her –

Mhairi: Like you did just now?

Will: You never gave me the chance.

Mhairi: I kept trying. Did you not see? It was breaking my heart. If you'd just got there yourself – but it was like it didn't suit you to see. Not your own daughter. Maybe Imo's right – you don't get mental health -

Will: Bollocks. You wanted to play hero all by yourself.

Mhairi: Hero? Trying to browbeat CAHMS into proper counselling? What use is group therapy to a child?

Will: We had the money –

Mhairi: Then listening to you berating the NHS for sedating people – and there's my daughter

Will: Our daughter –

Mhairi: Crying and begging me to let her take them – I'm no hero –

Will: She's not on anti-depressants –

Mhairi: She wouldn't have got through her exams. She's going to try and come off them. She's tried before. But it makes her feel so shit –

Will: I can help her.

Mhairi: She says it gives her brain freeze –

Will: I'll read up on it – speak to a specialist –

Mhairi: I've met them all, Will. She's going to try again when things have settled down. Ben knocked her for six –

Will: He was Cherry's friend –

Mhairi: Get a grip, Will. She feels responsible –

Will: That's ridiculous –

Mhairi: Then exams. Uni. She'll be away from home – she needs to settle in first -

Will: If she gets in –

Mhairi: We need to believe in her.

Will: I believe in her.

Mhairi: Right now. It's the least you can do, Will. She'll get her grades, go to Aberdeen –

Will: My Scamp. On anti-depressants. I can't -

Mhairi: You can't choose what kind of child you get, Will. I won't have you making her feel the slightest bit bad for this. The slightest bit broken.

Will: Ben didn't seem broken.

Mhairi: I can't do this anymore, Will.

Will: You're right. This is – I don't know what this is. This is shit. I promise – I don't know what - I'm a shit doctor. I'm a shit dad. I -

Mhairi: I think I need to leave.

Will: What? Where? It's the middle of the night.

Mhairi: I can't do this anymore. Happy families. It's not. I'm not.

Will: You're blaming me!

Mhairi: What?

Will: For Imogen. For the boy.

Mhairi: What are you – Will, I don't (care) -

Will: Fuck, we didn't even do anything!

Mhairi: Will, I don't – that doesn't matter. This has been going on for years.

Will: You didn't give me the chance - and now you're threatening – what?

Mhairi: I'll wait. Until Lyra's settled. But I can't keep - living - in all these lies. I –

Will: Why didn't you tell me?

Party. (Kathleen / Josh / Ernie / Mhairi / Lyra)

Lyra: If we keep not talking about it, how will it get better? We need to be open. To listen. And there might not be so many fucking tragedies in the future.

Mhairi: Cherry, it's true but you have to respect –

Kathleen: (*applauding*) Hear hear. The child's right. And actually, I'd like to say something – I should have done this years ago.

Josh: Are you sure, Kathleen?

Kathleen: Think it's bad now? Try the sixties. People popping all sorts. Hallucinating was all the rage but tell people you're out of sorts and they're not interested.

Ernie: Goodness it was fun though.

Kathleen: It's just your nerves, they said. A touch of melancholia.

Lyra: Melon-what?

Kathleen: They call it anxiety now. But it took – let's think – the early eighties to get a diagnosis.

Mhairi: Diagnosis?

Kathleen: Generalised anxiety disorder is its Sunday name.

Lyra: You too?

Kathleen: Hide it well, don't I? But don't underestimate the effort it takes to wash my hair some days. Make myself leave the house. I know it's only a couple of days a week but those kids need me and it makes a difference.

Mhairi: Why didn't you tell us?

Kathleen: Wouldn't make it any easier to get out of bed.

Will: Kathleen, my door is always open.

Kathleen: Cherry's right. I shouldn't have made up stories. So – I'm clinically anxious – and proud!

Ernie: *Ad astra per aspera.*

Mhairi: My goodness.

Ernie: Through adversity to the stars.

Kathleen: Look at the girls in my magazines. It could be worse.

Ernie: I think you're incredible.

Lyra: I'm glad you've told us, Kath. So how long –

Kathleen: Forty-five years? Give or take -

Lyra: A long time to be carrying that around.

Patient 1 / Mhairi / Cherry

Cherry: I'm so knackered, after – you know. I'm drinking so much caffeine –

Patient 1: Thanks for your time, doc. I'll go easy on the caffeine. See if that helps.

Cherry: You'd think I'd be buzzing –

Patient 1: Least it's not a heart attack.

Cherry: I just feel a bit – I don't know – flat -

Patient 1: Sheila's passing, mebbe? My wife. Mebbe that? Or I don't know.

Mhairi: I remember being terrified. I loved school. Leaving was - being chucked out of the nest - when you didn't know you could fly.

Cherry: I can't wait – that's the thing, after everything that's – getting out – so I'm not just the girl whose best friend -

Patient 1: You carry on, eh? One foot in front of the other. No-one wants a fuss.

Patient 2 / Cherry / Mhairi

Patient 2: Doctor William Campbell?

Cherry: Will, I know you're a doctor but I'm not sure you –

Patient 2: I'm worried about my son.

Mhairi: Cherry –

Cherry: What?

Patient 2: They've just had a baby. A little girl. But he's shutting himself away.

Mhairi: You'll be excited about Croatia –

Cherry: Yes but –

Mhairi: You did get travel insurance, didn't you?

Patient 2: He needs to be bonding. I know he can't feed her but - give Emmy a break. She's run ragged.

Cherry: Make you take it out when you book for some reason.

Mhairi: Welcome to being a grown up!

Patient 2: She's tried talking to him. I've tried -
Cherry: I've got one more week off –
Patient 2: Is it my fault?
Cherry: And then I've got to be an adult.
Mhairi: Plenty of time for that later. Isn't there, Will?
Cherry: I wish –
Patient 2: It's like he's trapped behind like glass or something.

Patient 3 / Lyra / Mhairi

Suddenly, Patient 3 is there.

Lyra: I'd love to study medicine. *(Tugs hair)* I'd never be clever enough.
Mhairi: You're plenty clever enough. *(aside to Lyra)* Go easy on your hair, love.
Lyra: No way I'd be a GP. Dull as.
Patient 3: It's not stress. I'm a fucking delivery driver. The most stressful - only stressful thing - is matching the route they give me with the actual streets.
Lyra: I'd be like Imo. Disaster recovery.
Patient 3: I keep having – dunno how to - like flashbacks. And I'm right back. Dense heat. No fucking air. Basra. Did you serve, Doc?

Will shakes his head.

Mhairi: You'll get the grades –
Lyra: They can't bear me being at home for another year!
Patient 3: I have to pull over. I can't see the road right in fucking front of me. Heart's an AK-47.
Mhairi: Not true! You keep me sane, love.
Patient 3: I did my time. It was a shit show. But we got through it.
Lyra: Environmental science. Specialising in ecology? I need an A in Advanced Biology.
Mhairi: You'll get it, darling. Won't she, Will?
Patient 3: But right now, honestly Doc, it's like I'm cracking up, ken?

