

# Shell Connections

NEW PLAYS  
FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

*Connections Series*

*The Chrysalids*

adapted by David Harrower from the novel by John Wyndham

*More Light* Bryony Lavery

*After Juliet* Sharman Macdonald

*Gizmo* Alan Ayckbourn

*Don't Eat Little Charlie* Tankred Dorst with Ursula Ehler

*Eclipse* Simon Armitage

*Friendly Fire* Peter Gill

*Cuba* Liz Lohead

*Dog House* Gina Moxley

*Brokenville* Philip Ridley

*The Pilgrimage* Paul Goetzee

NEW CONNECTIONS: NEW PLAYS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

(*Asleep Under the Dark Earth* by Sian Evans, *The Chrysalids* adapted by David Harrower from the novel by John Wyndham, *Cuba* by Liz Lohead, *Dog House* by Gina Moxley, *Eclipse* by Simon Armitage, *The Golden Door* by David Ashton, *In the Sweat* by Naomi Wallace and Bruce McLeod, *More Light* by Bryony Lavery, *Shelter* by Simon Bent, *Sparklesbark* by Philip Ridley, *Travel Club* and *Boy Soldier* by Wole Soyinka, *The Ultimate Fudge* by Jane Coles)

NEW CONNECTIONS 99: NEW PLAYS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

(*After Juliet* by Sharman Macdonald, *Can You Keep a Secret?* by Winsome Pinnock, *The Devil in Drag* by Dario Fo, translated and adapted by Ed Emery, *Don't Eat Little Charlie* by Tankred Dorst with Ursula Ehler translated by Ella Wildridge, *Early Man* by Hannah Vincent, *Friendly Fire* by Peter Gill, *Gizmo* by Alan Ayckbourn, *King of the Castle* by Christina Reid, *The Pilgrimage* by Paul Goetzee, *Taking Breath* by Sarah Daniels)

INTERNATIONAL CONNECTIONS: NEW PLAYS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

(*The Actor* by Horton Foote, *The Bear Table* by Julian Garner, *The Exam* by Andy Hamilton, *Gold* by Timothy Mason, music by Mel Marvin, *Illyria* by Bryony Lavery, *Lady Chill*, *Lady Wad*, *Lady Lurve*, *Lady God* by Kay Adshear, *Nuts* by Fausto Paravidino, trs. Luca Scarlini and Zachery James Kinney, *Olive* by Tamsin Oglesby, *Starstone* by Christian Martin, trs. Penny Black, *Take Away* by Jackie Kay, *Team Spirit* by Judy Upton)

## Shell Connections

NEW PLAYS  
FOR YOUNG PEOPLE



*faber and faber*

First published in 2003  
by Faber and Faber Limited  
3 Queen Square London WC1N 3AU

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Typeset by Country Setting, Kingsdown, Kent CT14 8ES  
Printed in England by Mackays of Chatham plc, Chatham, Kent

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Introduction and notes © Suzy Graham-Adriani 2003

Interviews © Jim Mulligan 2003

*Brokenville* © Philip Ridley

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*Dust* © Sarah Daniels 2003

*The Ice Palace* © Lucinda Coxon 1995

first published by Methuen Drama in 1995, adapted from the novel  
*Is-Slottet* by Tarjei Vesaas, translated from the Norwegian  
by Elizabeth Rokkan, published by Peter Owen Ltd.

*An Island Far from Here* © Laura Ruhonen 2002

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A CIP record for this book is available from the British Library

0-571-22014-2

2 4 6 8 10 9 7 5 3 1

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## Preface

The *Shell Connections* programme has everything: exciting new plays, committed and inspired performers and an audience that wants to be challenged, provoked and entertained. It's a model of what the theatre should be, and of what I hope the National Theatre will be in the years to come.

It's all the more exciting for starting in youth theatre companies and schools all over the world. I love the way it connects us at the National with the artists and audiences of the future, and I love the way it inspires so many young people to discover how urgent and necessary the theatre can be.

Shell's generous sponsorship enables the National to engage directly with young talent across the country, and we invariably find great bursts of creative energy and intelligence wherever we go.

It's no surprise that so many of our best playwrights have been eager to write for *Connections*. They know what's good for them. I can't wait to discover what riches have been unearthed this year.

NICHOLAS HYTNER  
*Artistic Director of the National Theatre*

## Introduction

*Shell Connections* is the most imaginative, significant, large-scale new plays programme for teenagers in the world. Throughout the UK, Ireland, Italy, the USA, Scandinavia, Japan and Australia thousands of young actors perform in several hundred local premières of ten specially commissioned new plays.

This fifth anthology of *Connections* plays is as wide-ranging and eclectic as its predecessors. It features ten works from some of the finest writers of our time. This volume brings you new plays from Philip Ridley, Laura Ruohonen, Jon Fosse, Lucinda Coxon, Connie Congdon, Christopher William Hill, David Farr, Maya Chowdhry, Sarah Daniels and Mark Ravenhill.

When commissioning the plays, our admiration for the writers' work was of paramount importance. We particularly wanted to include contemporary writers from countries that have become involved with the programme, so we approached Norway and Finland's best known writers, Jon Fosse and Laura Ruohonen. They wrote in their mother tongues and were speedily and expertly translated by David Harrower (for Jon Fosse's *Purple*) and David Hackston for Laura Ruohonen's *An Island Far from Here*). Craig Slaughter, our American collaborator at ACT (the Actors' Conservatory Theatre) in San Francisco organised a residency at the O'Neill Conference Centre, Connecticut, for Connie Congdon and Mark Ravenhill. Their plays were written and workshopped there in August 2002. At the same time, we worked with ACT on the Sarah Daniels piece and *Dust* had its American premiere at the Zeum that same month. *Multiplex* was developed in association

## SHELL CONNECTIONS

with Plymouth Theatre Royal, where Christopher William Hill is currently writer in residence. All the plays were then workshopped at the National Theatre with a consultative group of young people from across London who had been nominated by their drama teachers.

There were 170 schools and youth theatres which had successfully applied to join the programme. In autumn 2002 the plays were ready for the next step in the process, where the groups chose the play they most wanted to do. At a weekend retreat in Keswick, Cumbria, the groups' leaders, plus the writers and facilitating directors, workshopped all the plays. This meant everybody was able to start the rehearsal process in the best way possible – having talked about the play directly with its writer and with expert advice on hand from directors. The notes accompanying the plays in this anthology are based on what happened in those workshops.

In March 2003 the plays were premiered at a venue local to each group and all 170 productions were visited by a team from the National. The Shell Connections Festival was launched at Newcastle Theatre Royal on 28 March 2003, and continued at Belfast's Lyric Theatre, Cambridge Arts Theatre, Clwyd Theatr Cymru, Keswick's Theatre by the Lake, Scarborough's Stephen Joseph Theatre, Nottingham Playhouse, Plymouth's Theatre Royal, Edinburgh's Royal Lyceum Theatre, Bath's Theatre Royal, London's Albany Stage, Brighton Pavilion Theatre and London's Tricycle Theatre. The 2003 cycle culminated in a fantastic summer festival in July in the Cottesloe and Olivier Theatres at the National, London.

But it doesn't stop there. With the publication of this volume many more schools and theatre groups around the world have the chance to read and produce the plays for years to come. You'll find the work here offers a whole range of cast sizes and presents a multiplicity of settings: the dark side of the moon, a multiplex cinema, the tarot

## INTRODUCTION

universe, Roman London and the eve of Queen Elizabeth II's Golden Jubilee. There's lots of comedy, quests for courage, fame and fortune, tales of sinister parallel worlds and magical happenings. You're going to be spoilt for choice.

SUZY GRAHAM-ADRIANI  
*National Theatre*  
March 2003

# THE CROSSING PATH

Maya Chowdhry

## Characters

[to come]

### SCENE ONE

*Music (Ascension, 'Someone', Paul Oakenfold – Tranceport 1): 'Sometimes I wonder if my dreams are wild, sometimes I know they'll all come true. I need somebody who can move my world . . .'*

*Noon. A young woman: Rhiannon (seventeen, wearing a short violet dress and red boots, carrying a purple bag, hair in long plaits – feather in her hair) stands in front of the railway tracks. She looks first one direction and then the other.*

**Rhiannon** I can't decide.

*Rhiannon takes a pack of Tarot cards from her pocket and cradles them in her hands. She looks down, shuffles them through her fingers, draws one card and holds it up in the air, facing it away from her.*

*If it's the Fool Card I'll know what to do. (Rhiannon turns the card to face her.) A young person hovers over the edge of a cliff; they appear to be flying, arms outstretched towards the noon sun. In the distance a bird glides towards the plains. Numerous paths stretch out in different directions. (Rhiannon puts the card into her pocket, looks in both directions and climbs across the railway tracks.) A youthful journey. Stepping onto the path with no fear for the future.*

*Thunder rolls and the sky lights up: silver to black, silver to black.*

The sky dreaming, watching me go.

*Rain pelts down. Rhiannon runs along the railway*

*lines and into the near distance.*

## SCENE TWO

*Rhiannon rushes into the train carriage; she's soaked. She takes off her coat and tries to dry her hair with it. She rummages in her bag, makes a roly; lights it and inhales deeply. She squints as she stares at the fuzzed countryside through the window of the moving train.*

**Rhiannon** Where am I going?

*Gregory (nineteen, wearing indigo twisted Levi jeans, trainers and a gold designer shirt) flies through the carriage holding his mobile phone to his ear.*

**Gregory** (to Rhiannon) Wake up, wake up, wake up!

*Rhiannon ignores Gregory, takes out her Tarot cards and shuffles them; she fans them out on the seat and closes her eyes. Gregory reaches out a hand to shake with.*

And smell, smell, smell.

*Kendra (holding a glittery wand) and Stella (holding a silver vacuum flask) sit down opposite Rhiannon. Rhiannon opens her eyes but continues to stare at the cards.*

**Gregory** A spell, spell, spell?

**Kendra** And dance, dance, dance!

**Stella** (to Kendra) Yeah, if we ever come up we will.

**Gregory** (into phone and to Kendra) Yeah? You going clubbing? Me too? Where? Good. Yeah.

*Kendra leans round Gregory and holds out a light for Rhiannon's roly.*

**Gregory** Come on baby . . . (*light my fire*).

**Kendra** Who's your friend?

**Rhiannon** (*takes a drag*) No friend of mine.

**Gregory** I'm Gregory. Speak to me, here – (*Tries to pass phone to Rhiannon who blows smoke in his face.*) She's not having any of it. / What? I'm on the train, place is full of losers. (*Pause.*) I've already left the coast.

**Kendra** What a total arse!

*Rhiannon focuses on her Tarot cards.*

**Rhiannon** Ignoring him's the best bet. Where you off to?

**Stella** Clubbing. What about you?

**Gregory** (*into phone*) There's girls, wanna speak to them, go on.

*Rhiannon chooses a Tarot card and lays it in a Celtic Cross spread; she turns the card over.*

**Rhiannon** (*to herself*) The Fool, the heart of the matter. (*to Stella*) I'm . . . I've . . . I'm going on the anti-globalisation demo. I've got this interview as well . . . for a college in London.

**Stella** Cool. We're at Southampton.

**Rhiannon** (*they shake hands*) I'm Rhiannon, have we met?

**Kendra** (*shakes head: no*) Kendra.

**Rhiannon** (*to Kendra*) The wand's cool.

**Stella** She's a bit of a magician. You read the Tarot cards?

**Rhiannon** My own.

**Stella** You a traveller?

**Rhiannon** Is it that obvious?

**Stella** No, just wondering.

*Gregory pushes through them and tries to put the phone to Stella's ear.*

**Gregory** Say hi.

**Stella** (*she brushes him off*) Get off, idiot!

*Rhiannon chooses another Tarot card and lays it in the spread.*

**Rhiannon** (*to herself*) That which crosses you.

*The train stops abruptly; they lurch forward, Gregory falls onto Rhiannon's cards.*

You're really bugging me.

*Rhiannon pushes Gregory off and he falls onto the floor.*

**Kendra** Who's steering the ship!

*Rhiannon turns over the Tarot card.*

**Rhiannon** The Collective Unconscious.

*The carriage doors are opened and groups of young people, dressed up for a night out, flood in.*

**Kendra** (*waves wand*) Yea, party in the house!

*Gregory gets up and pushes through the crowd into the end of the carriage, grabbing some devil-finger-puppets off Fordon (holding a laser-light) as he goes.*

*Hubert (wearing a helmet and pads) flies into the carriage on his 'switchboard'. Jiro (holding a silver flight-case) and Nori (holding a climbing rope and crampon) saunter in and sit at one end of the carriage.*

*Levia dances (holding an MP3 player – pumping out dance music: 'Castles in the Sand'). Levia raves to the music, Kendra gets up and dances with her, pumping the air with her fist; Stella dances round her.*

*Glowsticks and laser lights flash and swirl, illuminating the journey. Rhiannon continues to draw her Tarot cards and lay them out; she's obscured by*

*everyone – the music blasts out, their dance surrounds her.*

**Singers** (*sing along with club track*)

You can set yourself free  
If you dance with me  
If you can see  
A way to be.

*Renee (wearing a white mask) raves with Oscar (leaning on a metal crutch). Cindy (wearing a bag in the shape of a crescent moon) looks for a seat. Hina (wearing an ankh around her neck) stands on the seat next to her.*

**Hina** (*sings along with club track*)

Life circles life,  
Opens up a place in leaving  
Hasn't got a place for grieving  
Lift yourself beyond death  
Carry love onto the path.

*Zada puts down a bicycle wheel and sits down with Ye Shen (who holds a metallic balloon) and Tivona (holding a make-up mirror).*

**Singers** (*sing along with club track*)

You can set yourself free  
If you dance with me  
If you can see  
A way to be.

*Alisha (holding a philosophy book) spins around Elvira (wearing a bugle around her neck). Eurodice puts down her dumb-bell set and dances with Freya (holding a small bottle of spring water).*

**Freya** (*sings along with club track*)

Swirling high

Take the sky route.  
One step  
Beyond journey,  
Glowing urban stars  
Hanging down.

*Monisha (holding a glowstick) dances with Kira (wearing a yellow neon band around her neck).*

**Singers** (*sing along with club track*)

You can set yourself free  
If you dance with me  
If you can see  
A way to be.

*Gregory walks down the carriage; he eyes Rhiannon and pushes his way through the crowd of ravers; they part and Rhiannon is revealed. Rhiannon lays a Tarot card on her Celtic Cross spread. Gregory puts his hand down over the card. Rhiannon pulls the Tarot card from under his hand and turns it over.*

**Rhiannon** The Past. What is passing out of influence.

**Gregory** Where you from then?

*Rhiannon places another Tarot card and turns it over.*

**Rhiannon** (*ignores him*) Your Higher Self or Guide. (*Rhiannon places another Tarot card and turns it over.*) That which is before you, the next turn of events.

*Stella stands opposite Rhiannon; bites into an apple. Gregory snatches the apple from Stella's hands and then another two apples from Kendra; he juggles with them.*

**Kendra** Calm it, mate.

**Gregory** (*to Rhiannon*) Want a dance or to see the sights?

**Stella** (*shaking with laughter*) He's mental.

**Kendra** Coming up?

*Stella tries to grab the apples as they're thrown into the air; she misses. She dances round Gregory. Rhiannon gets up; leans over the Tarot card spread, one card falls to the floor.*

Don't go.

**Rhiannon** Magic him away then, he's getting on my tits.

**Gregory** (*into phone*) Yeah, nice tits.

**Rhiannon** Get off. Waster!

*Gregory gets the devil finger-puppets from his pocket, ducks behind the baggage racks and starts doing a puppet show.*

**Gregory** The oracle speaks; can she foresee our destiny?

*Rhiannon bends down and grabs a Tarot card from under Gregory's foot.*

**Gregory** No, 'cause she's standing on it.

**Kendra** (*to Gregory*) What are you on?

**Gregory** Hey, what you got, can I have some?

**Kendra** Get lost.

**Gregory** Come on, mate, they (*points to ravers*) won't give me a drink, you got drugs, I know you have. I'll pay.

*Gregory gets out his wallet, flicks some notes.*

**Stella** (*to Kendra*) He's loaded.

**Rhiannon** Can't buy you / (*love*).

**Gregory** Name it, shame it, blame it!

*Rhiannon sits back down; she places another Tarot card down and turns it over.*

**Rhiannon** (*to herself*) Yourself as you see yourself.

I don't know how I attract the loser types but I do.

**Gregory** (*into phone*) Agree. They're spinning out. The bad loser types.

**Kendra** We gotta move out, claim some space. Come on.

*Stella and Kendra get up and go to move away from Gregory; start dancing together amidst the other ravers at the far end of the carriage.*

**Rhiannon** Yeah.

*Gregory stands directly opposite Rhiannon; blocks her way.*

**Gregory** (*into phone*) Can you juggle, can you buggle, can you find your way home?

**Rhiannon** Get out my way, idiot.

*Rhiannon shoves past Gregory and sits further up the carriage opposite Alisha, who's reading her book. Gregory follows and slumps down next to Alisha, who looks out of the window.*

**Gregory** (*to Alisha*) Why won't she talk to me?

**Alisha** (*keeps reading*) Who?

**Gregory** Her, I've tried everything.

**Alisha** Maybe she doesn't want to.

*Rhiannon re-lays her Tarot card spread.*

**Gregory** Maybe she does and she's playing hard to get.

**Alisha** Guys like you don't get it. / She's not interested.

**Gregory** (*parodies her*) Guys like you don't get it. She's not interested.

*Gregory bangs the back of her book. Alisha looks up.*

**Alisha** And yer a tosser. (*Turns away.*) No wonder she's ignoring you.

**Gregory** Don't, don't, do. Wait, look at me. We can chat, never mind about her.

**Alisha** (*puts her hand out towards his face*) Whatever!

*Gregory gets up and tries to sit down next to Rhiannon; she protects her Tarot cards.*

**Gregory** So. What ya saying, Gypsy Rose? Wanna dance?

**Rhiannon** I'm not getting into this with you so you can get lost. What you on?

**Gregory** Wait! Wait a minute. I've got things to say. Listen!

**Rhiannon** Not interested.

**Gregory** You're gagging.

**Rhiannon** You're bugging me and if you don't get lost I'm gonna / . . . (*give you a slap*).

**Gregory** What? What you gonna do? Say it. You gonna get one of your *mates* to crack my head?

**Rhiannon** As if they could be bothered.

**Gregory** What you saying?

**Rhiannon** You need to get a life.

**Gregory** And you! (*Gregory knocks all the Tarot cards to the floor.*)

**Rhiannon** See!

*Rhiannon picks up the Tarot cards and lays them out again. Kendra, Stella, Jiro and Nori move through the crowd of ravers, working their way towards Rhiannon and Gregory.*

**Stella** He still bothering you?

**Rhiannon** What a pratt. He's like glue.

**Kendra** Bigoted / glue at that.

**Gregory** (*gets on his phone*) Yeah mate, cool, got other plans now.

**Stella** (*nods towards Gregory*) Does that exist?

**Gregory** (*listens*) Babe on the train. Yeah . . . gonna give her one / and these cute girls.

**Rhiannon** Can't believe *he* exists!

**Stella** Wish he'd do one, he's bringing me down.

**Kendra** Let's dance!

**Stella** Come on, Rhiannon!

**Rhiannon** Nah, I wanna finish this.

*Music: Reality, Yabel (Tsunami) 'Creating a Bond with Reality.' Kendra and Stella continue to dance together. Nori and Jiro sit opposite and watch. Gregory sidles up to Rhiannon.*

**Gregory** (*into phone*) Moving in on her. Yeah. Think she's biting.

*Rhiannon places another Tarot card; she turns it over.*

**Rhiannon** (*to herself*) Your environment. That which surrounds you.

*Gregory goes to sit next to Rhiannon.*

**Rhiannon** What is your problem?

**Gregory** Do these cards on me.

**Rhiannon** No way! You trashed them.

**Gregory** Who are you? Where you going? Talk to me.

**Rhiannon** You don't look my type; you're from another world.

**Gregory** Why does it matter who I am?

**Rhiannon** You're wearing flash clothes, you've got loads of money, think you can buy your way into the party and I *know* I've nothing to say to you.

**Gregory** Are you a student?

**Rhiannon** See, you've just made a big assumption about me based on how I look.

**Gregory** I w . . . (*as*) am studying economics at York University . . . dabble in stocks when I get a chance.

**Rhiannon** (*gets up*) I've nothing to say to you, except you better not cross my path on the anti-globalisation demo tomorrow.

**Gregory** (*gets up*) Your type are a waste of space, smashing up other people's property. What gives you the right? Who d'you think you are?

**Rhiannon** And what gives you lot the right to dictate commodity prices based on your profit so that a farmer growing rice in India gets crap money and can't feed his family?

**Gregory** You know nothing about how it works, that's just socialist diatribe. / I bet you've not bought a train ticket.

**Rhiannon** And you know nothing about life and the earth and how humanity can exist.

*Hubert appears on his switchboard from the midst of the crowd of ravers, followed by Oscar on his crutch.*

**Gregory** (*into phone*) The mob's just moved in.

**Hubert** (*to Rhiannon*) Is he bothering you?

**Gregory** You know nothing about anything.

*Rhiannon stands face to face with Gregory.*

**Rhiannon** Get out of my face, idiot.

**Gregory** Can't admit you're wrong.

*Hubert and Oscar stand behind Rhiannon.*

**Hubert** Leave her alone.

**Gregory** What you gonna do about it?

**Hubert** Shut yer mouth for you.

*Gregory goes to grab Hubert. Jiro and Nori rush over and grab Gregory. Rhiannon sits down; she places another Tarot card; she turns it over.*

**Rhiannon** (*to herself*) Hopes and fears of a goal.

*Jiro, Hubert, Elvira, Renee and Fordon grab Gregory. There's a scuffle and they hold him tight, lift him up towards the train door.*

**Gregory** (*struggling*) Get off, losers.

**Hubert** We were gonna say jump but you wouldn't have the nerve.

**Nori** Leave it, he's not worth it.  
**Jiro** I say bounce him.  
**Rhiannon** He wants attention. You're winding him up even more.  
**Hubert** Thought he was bugging you.  
**Rhiannon** More than.  
**Jiro** Come on.  
**Rhiannon** Don't . . . (*get violent with him*). Just put him in the next carriage or something.  
**Jiro** We can do better than that.  
**Gregory** I'll get you for this.

*Elvira and Renee hold open the carriage door; the others act like they're going to throw him out. The train lurches forward, sparks fly up from the tracks, Gregory falls out the door. Kendra and Stella stop dancing.*

**Rhiannon** You idiots, you could've . . . / (*killed him*).  
**Jiro** He fell.  
**Hubert** Deserved it.  
**Rhiannon** No, no one does. (*Rhiannon holds her hands over her Tarot card spread.*) The outcome. (*Pause.*) I see it now; it's not about me.  
*Stella and Kendra stand over Rhiannon.*

**Kendra** What?  
**Rhiannon** The Tarot reading, it's not about my journey, there's a message about this train journey.  
**Stella** What do you see?  
**Rhiannon** (*points at the cards*) Six and eight of birds. The train's going in a different direction from the one it should.  
**Stella** What does that mean?  
**Rhiannon** I don't know.  
**Kendra** Back there when Gregory fell out, the jolt was from the train changing tracks.

**Stella** So?  
**Kendra** Maybe it's on the wrong line.  
**Stella** That's always happening, it doesn't mean anything.  
*Rhiannon takes her Tarot cards and shuffles them – she draws out three cards; holds one and passes the others to Kendra and Stella.*  
**Rhiannon** Body, mind, soul.  
*The train carriage jolts abruptly as it pulls into a station.*  
 You should get off here.  
**Kendra** Why?  
**Rhiannon** I've seen it, you've got to tell everyone.  
**Kendra** (*looks out the window*) This is the right station; the train can't be going in the wrong direction.  
*Rhiannon grabs her bag.*  
**Stella** Where you going?  
**Rhiannon** I don't know. I feel like I should go and look for him.  
**Kendra** Why?  
**Rhiannon** The cards . . . (*said I should*). I have to know he's all right.  
**Kendra** Watch out for him, he's full of crap.  
**Rhiannon** I can look after myself, I'm a traveller. I know where I'm going.  
*Rhiannon leaps onto the platform and closes the door. Darkness.*

## SCENE THREE

*Darkness. A torch cuts through the blackness and then*