

TOGETHERNESS

FADE UP SOUND OF FINGERS TAPPING ON A KEYBOARD.

ED (READING TEXT) Hi there, my name is Ed. I'm one of the Co-ordinators for the Volunteer Group for the local area. It's my job to identify vulnerable people – elderly, housebound – and their particular needs. Please confirm if you've got this message.

BEEP!

Confirm

Confirm

Confirm

(READING TEXT) That's great, guys, you rock! I will give you all a call over the next few hours.

A PHONE RINGING.

Shopping, Walking a dog. Having a Chat.

ANOTHER JOINS.

Tests? That too . Although we're being tested in so many ways.

Anyway, you may need something we've not even thought about yet

THREE PHONES RINGING NOW.

Sign up here. Click here. Volunteer here.

A CRESCENDO OF RINGING. SUDDENLY CUTS.

ED (ON PHONE) Hi, it's Ed....

Hello Janet.... how can I help?

Some shopping...that's fine. That's exactly what we're here for. Send over the list?

Number 15? Got it...

(ANOTHER CALL)

Hi, It's Ed. It's one of volunteers....

It's Winston. Your dog's called Winston. That's pretty appropriate. Oh, you thought about renaming him Boris. Lovely.

Walkies. It'll be my pleasure....

(ANOTHER CALL)

Hi. Ed here. Sorry to keep you waiting.

Of course, we pick up prescriptions. I've got to go out to Tesco anyway.

Name? Mr Mulroney. Mr Mulroney at Number 44.

Thank you. Thank you. Yes, it's all about community, isn't it? At a time like this. It's all about togetherness.

(PHONE RINGS)

Beatrice? Bea?

BEATRICE Hello, Ed...

ED What the fuck?

BEATRICE That's nice.

ED I mean what's the actual fuck...

BEATRICE I thought you'd be happy to hear from me.

ED What? After you walked out three months ago? Correction, walked, took my Brompton, and bitched the damn hell about me? to all your friends.

BEATRICE Ed...

ED And probably half the strangers on the street. And Facebook. And -

BEATRICE I always said you were good in bed though. Didn't I? Be honest – the chemistry we had was awesome.

ED It was –

BEATRICE C'mon, Ed.....

ED Alright. Alright. But what happened once we stopped being the Tooting branch of the Kama Sutra, Bea? What happened then?

(BEEP)

Janet. Yes. I've got the list. I'm reading it now. Pasta. Bananas. Nighttime Pads. Harvey's Bristol Cream. I'll be leaving in five.

(BEEP)

You still there?

BEATRICE I'm on my own, Ed. I'm self-isolating on my own.

ED Really?

BEATRICE Shut up. You know how lonely I get. I've watched practically everything on Netflix.

ED My Crazy Ex-Girlfriend?

BEATRICE Ha he.

ED Then try Porn Hub. Everyone else is.

BEATRICE You too?

ED Beatrice...

BEATRICE Oh you have, baby. That's so hot. That so dam hot.

(TONE)

Ed Hello. Ed here.

PEPYS Mr Pepys.

Ed Yes.

PEPYS Mr Samuel Pepys.

ED ...Right.

PEPYS: Word of warning. From one who knows. I've seen plagues and I've seen fire.s

ED You're the actual Samuel Pepys?

PEPYS: I want you to take care, Sirrah. Many a time and oft I'd have my nose pressed looking in at a tavern and I'd make the choice: Nay to the ale, nay to the venison, nay to the juicy dripping wench tugging fiercely at my cock –

ED: Really.

PEPYS: There is much one must forego in order to spare oneself from the pox.

(BEEP)

BEATRICE Can you just talk dirty to me?

ED No... .not now

(BEEP)

ED Winston's panting? At the leash ... Fantastic. Do I have any treats? What kind of treats? I'll I'll have a look. What kind of treats does Winston like?

(BEEP)

BEATRICE. I read somewhere it takes a woman seven minutes to cum.

ED Not now. I'm picking up panty liners. I'm walking a fucking dog called Winston. No – Boris!

(TONE)

MANSFIELD : This is Katherine Mansfield speaking.

ED: Mrs Mansfield, we're having trouble getting Vegemite.

MANSFIELD: I am not a damned Aussie.

ED: Don't Kiwis like Vegemite?

MANSFIELD: Yes, but learn to listen. At every moment be awake, remember yourself, be in the moment.

ED: So you don't want anything? ..

MANSFIELD The greatest failing of all is to be frightened

ED : I'll put you down for a call tomorrow.

MANSFIELD: By which time I will have written another short story..

ED; Excellent. Go for it.

(BEEP)

BEATRICE You have to leave? You're going now?

(RUMMAGING)

ED I'm looking for Doggie Treats, Beatrice.

BEATRICE Dogging?

ED Oh for heaven's sake, get you mind out of the gutter. What do I give a French bulldog?

BEATRICE Can't you spare me just a few more minutes?

ED I'm being a volunteer at the moment. I'm being a community hero.

(TONE)

Another call's coming through.

Boccaccio: Snr Boccaccio here.

ED: Ah yes. You run the phone repair shop, don't you?

BOCCACCIO: You like sex?

ED: This isn't a sexline, Snr

BEATRICE Yes it is. Be my hero. Hero with a hardon.

ED Fuck you're horny

BOCCACCIO: Horny? But this sex is it for love? Or manipulation?

BEATRICE Be my total bad boy hero...talk dirty to me....

BOCCACCIO Like if you do it with the Nuns?

ED: Nuns?!

BEATRICE Ohhhh that's right. My Sound of Music fantasy!

ED Stop it. Stop it – *STOP IT!*

 (BEEP)

 Yes, I've just received it, Mr Mulroney. Three items and the home enema kit. I am about to go out to shop for somebody else, so I'll swing by Pharmacy by Tesco....

 Excuse me? Not Tesco? Why not next to Tesco?

 Because it's run by a Mr Sharma? You don't want me to go there because he's Asian?

 (BEEP)

 Fuck that. Fucking fuck that.

BEATRICE What? Yes fuck yes

ED The guys a racist. I'm volunteering for a racist.

BEATRICE Who is?

ED Bea, I'm running around like a blue arsed fly doing my bit for the community, and it turns out I've got to pander to a racist.

BEATRICE Wow. Not cool.

ED No.

BEATRICE Not cool at all.

 (TONE)

BOCCACCIO: Snr Boccaccio again.

ED: Right... -

BOCCACCIO: I remember the plague.

ED: Do you?

BOCCACCIO Si. Ignorance and cruelty. Such cruelty. The violence of our disease was that the sick communicated it to the healthy just as a fire catches.

ED: That's what we are trying to prevent. –

BOCCACCIO It also brought out the best in us, as well as the worst. Our lowest and our highest nature. A test for us all – how to be kind to our enemies, yes? How to be kind to those we wanted to judge?

(BEEP)

ED Does Boris or Winston like stale biscuits? I've got some custard creams, does he like old custard creams?

Okay, I'll take another look.

(BEEP)

Bloody dog. Apparently, he won't eat stale biscuits. I mean, we're in the middle of a pandemic and the dog wants fresh biscuits.

BEATRICE Keep talking, Ed.... I'm just going to...

ED Beatrice. are you actually –

BEATRICE MOANS

You said I had moobs. A hairy back.

BEATRICE: I didn't say that wasn't hot. Sort of. Mostly I'm so turned on, please ...

BEATRICE MOANS LOUDER. TO CONTINUE UNDER.

Jesus Christ, Bea, what the hell's going on?

(BEEP)

You want to add to the list? Very well.... bottle of vodka, bottle of gin, two bottles of Harvey's Bristol Cream.... that it?

Nothing...you know...like food? Solid. Nourishing....

No, I'm sorry, Janet, I wasn't suggesting you were an...alcoholic. That this wasn't a totally appropriate list and I can totally get that for you.

(BEEP)

ED: I will be going to the pharmacy next to Tesco's, Mr Mulroney, since it is recommended that all volunteers limit their exposure outdoors when running errands.

(TONE)

KAFKA Being housebound is my dream, solitude my paradise

ED: Oh and another fucking blast from the past.

KAFKA: Kafka.

ED: You think you have the symptoms?

KAFKA Franz Kafka. Kafka. That's not a cough, it's a name.

ED: Gotcha

Kafka : I am sitting quietly at the table. Because illness can spread.

This I know for I have seen it. And yet one sees cut flowers drinking. Is there such a thing that dying creatures drink? And I never found any food I liked. My illness awoke my dreams, so I never needed substances

(BEEP)

ED: Drugs are just the same as everyone else,

(BEEP)

Do I have Hobnobs? No. Or Battenberg? Are you telling me you give your French Bulldog a slice of Battenberg?

BEATRICE MOANS LOUDER AS SHE COMES TO A CLIMAX

(BEEP)

Janet...no, *no!* I'm practically an alcoholic myself. It's the boredom. It's the boredom and stress and what else is there to do but get fat?

(BEEP)

Mr Mulroney, that's racist... what you just said was racist and I don't have to put up with it, I really don't;

(BEEP)

There are people going to foodbanks and you want to feed your dog cake? What are you, Marie Antoinette? This is ridiculous.

(BEEP)

What kind of community spirit is it? Shouldn't we be coming together, burying our differences to fight a common foe.

(TONE)

DEFOE: Indeed. Indeed, we should.

ED: I know who you are.

DEFOE: Defoe

ED: Daniel Defoe.

DEFOE: The very same. Stap me vitals.

ED: So Mr Defoe, can I help you? What do you need?

DEFOE: Solace rather than sustenance.

BEATRICE: I'm imagining you hugging me...

DEFOE : When does the ravishing begin?

ED: Ignore her.

DEFOE: I and thee, she and me or all of us all three.

BEATRICE Naughty Daniel....

ED: I'm not... gay.

DEFOE: What is this Gay? Saucy wenches, Young bucks, I wrote them all. Beware of the pox, though and be clean. Plague and pestilence. These were my childhood companions. If anyone knew about self-isolation, Robinson Crusoe did. I spit on your Samuel Pepys.

ED Yes, well he put it about.

DEFOE: Diaries are the worse liars. And sick times bring forth diseased folk with diseased minds. Wherever God erects a house of care, The Devil always builds a chapel there

ED: Actually, I'm an atheist. .

DEFOE Be thou not like Poopy Pepys.

ED: Yes exactly. Shouldn't we be coming together to show what community really means. Shouldn't we be communicating and collaborating to be the best that we can be.

Shouldn't we be coming together?

BEATRICE CLIMAXES NOISLY.

Hello?

Mr Mulroney? Janet?

Are you there...?

HELLO?

SILENCE

Beatrice. Beatrice....

BEATRICE You stud.

ED They hung up. All of them. The past and the present.

BEATRICE You absolute Stud. I told you, my lover, you're the best.

ED Care in the fucking community. It's a joke.

BEATRICE When this is over, would you like me to move back in. To give it another go.

ED Really?

BEATRICE I was a fool. You're a good man, Ed.

ED I am?

BEATRICE Let's do this again. You're my dirty filthy Community hero. Thank you.

BEATRICE HANGS UP.

ED (READING TEXT) Hi there, my name is Ed. I'm one of the Co-ordinators for the Volunteer Group for the local area. It's my job to identify vulnerable people – elderly, housebound – and their particular needs. Please confirm if you've got this message.

BOCCACCIO Cruel times do not have to make cruel people

KAFKA; To be alone and still that is not always bad

ED Please confirm if you've got this message.

BOCCACCIO: You must respond, and it is how you respond, that is everything.

ED: Please confirm if you've got this message.

DEFOE: Let not the distemper spread, neither to our bodies nor into our souls

MANSFIELD: These are the times that try our souls.

KAFKA: Illness is a titanic struggle between evil and good.

BEATRICE You're the kindest man I know, Ed. Never stop trying to be kind.

ED: Please confirm if you've got this message.

END OF PLAY

