

GONE MIDNIGHT

by

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Casting requirements:

Tony: 50+, gentle, docile

Gillian: 50+, snappy

Ben: 18+, tearaway

Two Policemen/women: Any age/gender, non-speaking

SUGGESTED OPENING MUSIC: HOT STUFF

SCENE: A BEDROOM.

GILLIAN IS LYING IN BED, READING A MAGAZINE, HAPPY ENOUGH. THE MUSIC CONTINUES.

TONY ENTERS, CLEARLY STRESSED, IN PYJAMAS. HE STANDS AT THE SIDE OF THE BED, LOOKING AT GILLIAN.

TONY: They're at it again, you know.

SHE IGNORES HIM AND CARRIES ON READING.

I said they're at it again, you know.

MORE IGNORANCE.

HE WALKS AROUND TO HER SIDE OF THE BED AND PRODS HER. SHE LOOKS UP.

Next door. They're at it again.

SHE FROWNS AT HIM. EVENTUALLY SHE TAKES OUT HER EARPLUGS.

GILLIAN: Sorry?

TONY: Next door. They're at it again.

GILLIAN: They're young people, let them have fun. It is a Tuesday night after all.

TONY: Some people have work in the morning.

GILLIAN: But you don't, why are you so worried about it?

TONY: Because it's gone midnight and they've started to have a rave.

GILLIAN: It's not a rave, you don't know what the word rave means. It's just a bit of disco, that's all. It's better than some of the rubbish I've heard that lot outside the supermarket play, just be grateful they're not playing Mika.

TONY: I can't believe you sometimes.

GILLIAN: Look what are you going to do? Be a man and go and ask them to be quiet? Call the police? Go and join them for a boogie and and bloody well cheer up? Or just come and get some sleep?

TONY: How can I sleep with that racket going on?

GILLIAN: Well go and do something about it then!

PAUSE, TONY STANDS AWKWARDLY.

(sighs) If you don't mind I'm trying to read.

SHE PUTS HER EAR PLUGS BACK IN AND GETS BACK TO HER MAGAZINE.

TONY: So much for being a bloody team.

SHE TAKES HER EARPLUGS OUT AGAIN, AND LOOKS UP FROM HER MAGAZINE.

GILLIAN: Sorry?

TONY: I just said I love you.

SHE LOOKS UNIMPRESSED, PUTS THE PLUGS BACK IN AND GETS BACK TO HER MAGAZINE.

(as he walks back to his side of the bed) Shame the love died in 1986.

TONY SITS ON HIS SIDE OF THE BED, AND STARTS PLAYING WITH HIS MOBILE PHONE.

GILLIAN LOOKS UP FROM HER MAGAZINE. EARPLUGS OUT.

GILLIAN: What are you doing?

TONY: I'm texting next door.

GILLIAN: Texting them? Oh that'll really show them, won't it?

TONY: It's the only language these kids understand.

GILLIAN: Kids? They're in their mid-twenties.

TONY: Kids.

TONY CONTINUES TO TEXT, OFTEN LOOKING CONFUSED BY HIS PHONE.

GILLIAN: Can't believe you don't have the guts to ask them properly.

TONY: I am asking them properly. I'm saying please. You've got to learn to keep up with the world, there's nothing to be scared about with technology, you know?

GILLIAN: Technology may have progressed but a real man is still a real man.

TONY: (looking up from his phone) What was that supposed to mean?

SHE PUTS HER EARPLUGS BACK IN AND

GETS BACK TO HER MAGAZINE.

HE LOOKS HER UP AND DOWN, INSULTED,
BEFORE RETURNING TO HIS MOBILE.

EVENTUALLY, HE PUTS THE PHONE AWAY. HE
REMAINS SITTING UP, WAITING FOR THE
MUSIC TO END. THE MUSIC CONTINUES.
TONY WAITS FOR WHAT SEEMS LIKE A LONG
TIME.

GILLIAN LAUGHS AT SOMETHING IN THE
MAGAZINE. HE TURNS TO HER, FRUSTRATED.

THE MUSIC STOPS.

TONY LAUGHS LOUDLY.

Aha, I told you it would work (turns to Gillian) I said I told you it would work.

SHE CLEARLY CAN'T HEAR HIM. HE NUDGES
HER.

GILLIAN: (ripping the earplugs out, angrily) What?

TONY: (delighted) Music stopped.

GILLIAN: What do you want, a medal?

TONY: (climbing in to bed) A thank you would have been nice.

GILLIAN: Sorry; thank you for sending a text message.

SHE TURNS BACK TO HER MAGAZINE. HE
STARES AT HER.

TONY: What have I done wrong now?

GILLIAN: (snaps) Can't a woman read a magazine in peace?

TONY: Sorry. It's just you seem so...angry.

GILLIAN: This article, which I might add is very good, is a page long. (looks at her watch) It's taken me forty-five minutes to read and I've still not finished. Firstly it was your new security lock on the front door confusing you, then it was your dodgy stomach, then it's the neighbours. Come on, Tony, we've been married nearly thirty years, give me a bit of space?

TONY: (climbing out bed) Fine, I'll give you space, I'm going to sleep in the spare room.

GILLIAN: There isn't a bed in there any more, you got rid of it, remember? To stop my sister staying over?

TONY: Didn't bloody work, did it? I'm gonna kip on the sofa. Like she does.

TONY IS BY NOW NEARLY OUT OF THE ROOM.

GILLIAN: Tony, get back to bed.

TONY: No it's fine, seriously, I need space as well. Actually.

GILLIAN: Don't be so childish, we've not got any spare blankets, you'll freeze down there.

TONY: A real man can survive. Thank you.

GILLIAN: Tony!

TONY: (clearly intimidated) Yes darling.

HE JUMPS BACK INTO BED.

TONY LIES STATICALLY, LOOKING STRAIGHT AHEAD, AS GILLIAN READS. SHE LOOKS OVER, AND PUTS THE MAGAZINE ON THE FLOOR.

GILLIAN: Oh I'll read it in the morning.

TONY: I'm not stopping you.

GILLIAN: Let's just get some sleep, hopefully I'll wake up next to an adult.

SHE TURNS AND SWITCHES OFF THE LIGHT
(LIGHTS DOWN A LITTLE, BUT WE CAN
STILL SEE THE ACTION)

THEY BOTH SHUT THEIR EYES. AFTER A
BRIEF MOMENT, TONY OPENS HIS AND
TURNS TO HER.

TONY: Just to clear it up, I am a real man. I was concerned about the security lock because three houses on this very road have been burgled in the last two months and we're just not safe, I was annoyed about the neighbours because it's simply a lack of respect to their elders and as for my stomach...well I thought you cared about my health, my apologies.

GILLIAN: I thought we were sleeping.

TONY: Sorry.

LIGHTS DOWN.

LIGHTS UP VERY BRIEFLY. BOTH TONY AND
GILLIAN ARE IN DEEP SLEEP.

THERE'S A BANGING/KNOCKING NOISE. THE
NOISE IS HEARD AGAIN, A COUPLE TIMES.

GILLIAN AWAKES AND INSTANTLY SITS UP.

SHE LISTENS AS SHE HEARS THAT NOISE
AGAIN. SHE NUDGES TONY.

(in his sleep) Not now, Tina, you cheeky minx (giggles a bit).

GILLIAN NUDGES HIM AGAIN.

(still in his sleep) Oh go on then!

GILLIAN: Tony!

HE SITS UP INSTANTLY, AND LOOKS AROUND THE ROOM.

TONY: Hi...what?

GILLIAN: Two things, number one I think we're being burgled and number two, who the hell is Tina?

HE IS CLEARLY DAZED, HAVEN JUST AWOKEN.

(heavy whispering) Listen.

HE DOES. SILENCE.

TONY: I can't hear any music, did they start having a rave again...

GILLIAN: ...no, shhh.

SILENCE.

AFTER A VERY LONG PAUSE.

TONY: What?

GILLIAN: I think there's someone trying to break in downstairs.

TONY: What about my security lock?

GILLIAN: What about it?

TONY: (laughs) Are you seriously trying to tell me somebody has

gotten through my new lock? I don't think so, darling, now you just get back to sleep and we'll talk in the morning, okay?

WE HEAR THE NOISE AGAIN, TONY
SHUDDERS.

That's next doors cat. Fighting with the bins.

GILLIAN: Next doors cats fighting with the bins...what are you talking about? They haven't got a cat, you killed it. And the bins are around the back, that noise is coming from the front.

TONY: What noise?

GILLIAN: Tony...

TONY: ...shh.

THEY BOTH LISTEN. COMPLETE SILENCE.

TONY: See? Nothing, now...

GILLIAN: ...shhh.

LONG PAUSE. COMPLETE SILENCE.

TONY: Can we just get some sleep now? Please?

GILLIAN LIES BACK DOWN, SIGHING. TONY
JOINS HER.

THEY BOTH ATTEMPT TO SLEEP AGAIN.

TONY: (turning to her) Just to clear up, I did not kill next next doors cat, it committed suicide and I'm just the poor guy who gets the blame because I happen to be driving the car that it chose to leap under.

GILLIAN: Just go to sleep, Tony.

THEY BOTH DOZE OFF.

BANGING NOISE.

THEY BOTH SIT UP, SIMULTANEOUSLY. THE NOISE CONTINUES.

See. Now do you believe me?

TONY: You always think that I doubt you, Gillian when I never do, if you ask me this is merely an aspect of your insecure nature and...

GILLIAN: ...Tony, somebody is trying to break into our house, what are you going to do about it?

TONY: Me?

GILLIAN: Yes you. You're the man of the house aren't you?

TONY: Well it has been noted previously that you wear the trousers but...

GILLIAN: ...I can't believe you sometimes. What kind of man doesn't even protect his own wife and property? I'll tell you what kind of man, a...

TONY: (climbing out of bed)I don't want to know the answer because it's only going to be hurtful. Fine, I'll go down there and get beaten to a pulp by a yob with a baseball bat and acne.

GILLIAN: No, look Tony perhaps we should just...

TONY: ...I'll show you who the man of the house is.

TONY LEAVES THE SCENE. GILLIAN SITS.

WORRIED FOR A MOMENT.

TONY RETURNS.

(rubbing his hands, delighted) Nope, nobody down there, probably just your imagination, now can we get some sleep, please? I've got a busy day tomorrow.

TONY CLIMBS INTO BED.

GILLIAN: You didn't actually go downstairs, did you?

TONY: Of course I did, and there's absolutely nobody down there. Now, sleep?

TONY SHUTS HIS EYES.

GILLIAN: (sighs) You're such a coward.

TONY: (opens eyes) Me? I'm the one who just confronted a potential dangerous burglar, by myself, down there.

GILLIAN: No but you didn't, Tony, I know you didn't because we have very creaky stairs.

TONY: I went on tiptoes.

GILLIAN: I'm calling the police. Give me your mobile.

RELUCTANTLY HE HANDS IT TO HER. SHE
DIALS. TONY GRABS THE PHONE OFF HER.

TONY: No, I'm the man, remember? (to the phone) Police please. Hello, we're at 23 The Meadows in the centre of town and we think we're being burgled. Yes, we think. Well, the wife thinks, you know what they're like! She keeps hearing noises, apparently. Twenty minutes?! Yes, I know there's a lot of crime at the moment, there's a chance we could be added to your statistics shortly if you don't get round here soon enough. Okay, see you soon.

HE SWITCHES THE PHONE OFF.

We're only going to be wasting their time, do you know that?

GILLIAN: Well you'd know a lot about wasting people's time.

SHE LIES BACK DOWN AND SHUTS HER EYES. TONY STARES AT HER.

TONY: I really don't know why you're being such a horrible person to me. But I hope you sleep well.

HE LIES BACK AND SHUTS HIS EYES.

SILENCE.

GILLIAN: You know why.

TONY: If you're going to say what I think you're going to say I'm going to reply with my normal reply. Darling, you've got it all wrong.

GILLIAN: It was a year ago today Ben left us.

TONY: Darling, you've got it all wrong.

SHE SITS UP AND STARES AT HIM.

GILLIAN: Your own son runs away from home and you think I've got it all wrong?

TONY: (sitting up) He didn't run away from home, he's 23. That's called leaving home.

GILLIAN: Without any warning? He just left us, all because you sold his things in a selfish act of betrayal.

TONY: I got the wrong pile for the car boot sale. That doesn't me make a bastard, that just makes me somebody who

picks up things from the wrong pile.

GILLIAN: Things, Tony, things? You sold his bed.

TONY: I didn't mean to sell it. You remember what happened – the bed was our makeshift table at the car boot sale as somebody was using the dining room table to make rice crispy cakes. It was an old bed, it was too good an offer to turn down, seriously...three hundred quid for a bed like that? I would have been crazy to turn it down. I promised I'd get him a new one, with a comfy mattress, when things look up a bit, and I'm sorry that I had completely forgotten about lack of spare bed due to your sister constantly outstaying her welcome.

GILLIAN: She's not the only one.

TONY: Little jibes like that don't make a conversation, Gillian, they just make you sound nasty.

GILLIAN: You forced our son out, I have a right to be a bitch.

TONY: For the last time I did not force him out. (laughs falsely) He'll come back when he wants his washing doing, hey?

GILLIAN: (snaps) It's been a bloody year, Tony!

THEY BOTH SIGH AND LOOK AWAY FOR A MOMENT.

I'm sorry.

TONY: So am I. I'm sorry it's been such a bad year, sorry that I dragged you through this, but you know...

MORE BANGING NOISES.

...oh come on they must have got in by now, what are they trying to do? Dig their way into the living room?

GILLIAN: Well the police will be here soon.

TONY: Yeah, after the little bastards have nicked my telly. And the computer, how am I supposed to look for new jobs when I can't go on-line? It was always doomed to failure. Looks like I'll just have to carrying on 'temping'. I'm the world's oldest tea boy.

PAUSE.

(proudly) At least I do it with manners though. Unlike some of those kids I have to work with. (head drops) Gillian, I just don't fit in any more, do I?

GILLIAN LOOKS HIM UP AND DOWN, SMILES SYMPATHETICALLY, AND HUGS HIM.

GILLIAN: You never did. That's why I fell for you. You offered me so much more compared to the other guys, you know that. We've had adventures haven't we, scrapes?

TONY: (giggles) Remember Westcliffe-On-Sea, summer of '81?

SHE CONSIDERS FOR A LONG TIME.

GILLIAN: No.

TONY: (still giggling) You must do, it was brilliant, wasn't it?

GILLIAN: I'm sure it was. Hey, remember our wedding day?

THEY BOTH GIGGLE, ALMOST IN A DIRTY WAY.

GILLIAN: Things will get better again, they always do. And if not, well, we've probably had our fair share of the laughs already. My friends were wrong about us, when they kept telling me to go with somebody more...normal. Imagine if I took their advice hey? I'd be really bored. (daydreams for a split second) In my big house, and comfortable living. And my own horse. (snaps out it) Boring! I've got

you.

THEY HUG.

GILLIAN: What did your friends say about me?

TONY: (considers) She's alright.

GILLIAN: That it?

TONY: Yeah, but they didn't have foresight I had, you see. I knew you were...

TONY IS CLEARLY STRUGGLING.
EVENTUALLY, HE SMILES AT HIS CHOICE OF
WORD.

TONY: (romantically, direct eye contact) Extraordinary.

SHE GIGGLES.

MORE BANGING NOISES.

TONY: (stands) Right, that's it. I've had enough. The world has been taking the piss for far too long. I'm going to stand up for what is mine and if I die, well I'll die with dignity.

HE HEADS TOWARDS THE DOOR.

GILLIAN: (leaping up and standing next to him) No, darling, wait! I'm going with you. We're a team, remember?

TONY: No, I'm sorry Gillian. It's time I took responsibility.

LOUD SMASHING NOISE. TONY JUMPS BACK
AND HIDES BEHIND HER, AS IF TO USE HER
AS A SHIELD.

TONY: Bloody hell it's really happening.

GILLIAN PUSHES HIM AWAY, AND SHAKES HER HEAD. HE LIES ON THE BED, SHE HEADS TOWARDS THE DOOR.

GILLIAN: Honestly, if you want something doing...

TONY: ...Gillian don't, they'll hurt you.

GILLIAN: I'm already hurt.

SHE STORMS OUT.

TONY SITS UP.

TONY: I should really, probably, go with her.

VERY LONG PAUSE.

I really probably should.

LONG PAUSE.

Or I could just pretend I've had a heart attack?
(considers) No, she'd probably want proof.

GILLIAN'S VOICE: Are you sure you don't want a tea? Or a coffee?

TONY: (sitting up) She's making the burglar a cuppa? What the...

GILLIAN BURSTS IN, BEN FOLLOWS.

GILLIAN: (relieved, but clearly upset about something) Look who I found downstairs?

TONY LEAPS UP.

TONY: Ben! Son! Ben my son!

BEN: (unassuming) Hi, dad.

TONY: What are you doing here, this time of night? Why did you break in?

BEN: Lost my keys.

TONY: Are you okay? I mean...where did you go, what happened?

BEN: I haven't really got time to explain right now, dad, I was just wondering if perhaps you'd very kindly let me sleep in the garage tonight?

TONY: The garage? No, I'll tell you what...you sleep on the sofa, and you can even have my pillow as an apology for what happened. I'm not letting you go that easy, how about we get my finest bottle of malt out the cabinet and you can tell us all about the last year and your adventures? (turns to Gillian for reassurance) Hey?

GILLIAN: You know I don't touch whisky.

BEN: That's very kind dad, but please. Can you just give me the keys to the garage? Please?

TONY: (face drops) What's going on? Look, if you're going to hold an illegal rave down there...

GILLIAN: ...he's on the run from the police because he's a walking crime wave. Those houses, on our street that have been burgled. That was him, all of them.

BEN: (joking) Look dad, I know when we had that chat about careers for me a couple years back this probably wasn't high on your list...

TONY: ...what, a burglar? Well...

BEN: ...but I'm earning loads out of it. More than you've ever made, and I don't even work long hours, just a couple hours a night. It's a million times better than the minimum wage you're getting for being an office junior.

GILLIAN: You're stealing, Ben, that is not the same!

TONY: (turns away) Oh this is brilliant, isn't it? Look at us, hey? Father's unemployed, son's out breaking into houses, the mother's a junkie...

GILLIAN: ...I am not!

TONY: Well you might as well be, that's the kind of family we're turning into. I know these are desperate times but this has gone too far. (to Ben) It's not even like you're any good at it. Took you nearly half an hour to break in down there.

BEN: Well it's that new lock of yours, isn't it? How does that work?

TONY: (smiles) Right, well it's really clever actually, it's shaped like a 'U' you see so when you try to force it...

GILLIAN: ...don't encourage him! Stupid man.

TONY: Can't believe you gave birth to a criminal and I'm the one who gets the blame for it.

BEN: Well you threw me out onto the streets...

TONY: ...I did not throw you out, that was just a misunderstanding...

GILLIAN: ...okay! Okay. Tony, give me the keys to the garage.

TONY: What? Why?

GILLIAN: Do you want your son to be in prison?

THE POLICE BURST IN – 2 OFFICERS.

BEN: Who called the police?

THEY TAKE HIM AWAY. TONY LOOKS
HELPLESS.

GILLIAN: Who do you think?

BEN: Thanks Dad, you've just got rid of me again. Didn't last long, did it?

TONY: Look, we were being burgled...it was your Mother's idea...

GILLIAN: ...don't blame me for your mistakes, Tony.

TONY: But I thought you...(sighs) bugger.

GILLIAN FOLLOWS THEM OUT.

GILLIAN: (turning back to Tony) You really are an idiot sometimes.

THEY LEAVE THE SCENE.

TONY SLUMPS TO THE BED AND REFLECTS.

TONY: She's probably right.

HIS HEAD DROPS.

HOT STUFF COMES ON AGAIN. TONY LOOKS
AT THE WALL.

(stands, angry, shouting) Oh for...right. I'm sick of this. I'm

sick of everything. I'll show you what a real man is.

HE GETS HIS MOBILE, SITS BACK DOWN ON
THE BED.

(starts to text) This time I'm not even going to say
please...

THE END.