



THE ENEMY | RESOURCES TRANSCRIPTS

THE ENEMY | KIERAN

Finn den Hertog the director first approached me about it because I was looking for a copy of *An Enemy of the People*, in relation to another project. I was sort of loosely aware of it and had read it before years ago, and it felt kind of relevant to this other thing that I was writing. So... I think it was on Facebook actually, I asked if anyone had a copy of it I could borrow, and Finn noticed this and obviously he'd been thinking about it, thinking about an adaptation, and saw that I was thinking about the same play, so he set up a meeting and approached me about the idea of adapting it. So the idea actually came from Finn in the first instance and not from me.

This was 2016, and so we'd just had the Brexit vote, and Trump had just been voted in in America, and it's important to understand that in the original play, the original Ibsen play, you have this character at the heart of it, Dr Thomas Stockman, who is coming home to the small, rural Norwegian spa town where he lives to take up a position at the local baths which is the centre of the town's economy. And he finds a poison in the water and takes this information to his brother, the mayor. He expects that this information will be welcome and that everyone will want to shut everything down immediately, and he's met with a very different response. He becomes a bit of a pariah, he becomes the "enemy of the people" of the play's title, not a hero at all.

And so you had this thing going on in the play that was sort of something to do with a kind of "expert knowledge" from a kind of "doctor class", a kind of social elite, with scientific principles of rationality and reason and proof and evidence, but held in a kind of expert way by an elite class, pitted against popular will, and a kind of politically manufactured popular will. So the mayor turns the people of the town against his brother, because he doesn't want to have to shut down the baths, because the town's economy will be destroyed and therefore so will his political career. That's a long way of saying in 2016 when the UK had just voted for Brexit, and America had just voted in Trump, this thing about popular will versus elite experts, what was at the time getting called a kind of "metropolitan elite" if you like, felt really timely. It felt like there was something really interesting there. So that's why we looked at that. And then we kind of noticed that there was all this interesting stuff to do with the media there as well, and in the 19th century in a small town that's very much about the local press. And Ibsen gets this whole act - the original is a five act play - and Ibsen gets this whole act out of this question of whether or not the local paper are going to publish the doctor's article that contains this information.

We were looking at that and thinking "oh how do you adapt that?" because these days that's just done in a second, in a flash. He could just go online and publish it on the internet. So that led us to think about the media and how it functions in the 21st century in relation to these themes, in relation to popular will, to democracy, to truth. And we thought that there was actually something really interesting here about taking the story and the themes of this play and putting it in a 21st century context right now, where you can speak to very current questions of populism, the nature of truth in a digitised age, of social media and how that affects these debates. So that was it, that was the "why" of it. So we cobbled together a pitch document and took that to various people, including the National Theatre of Scotland who gave us a bit of support to develop the script, so that's how that happened.

So in some ways our adaptation of Ibsen's play stays very true to the original. It follows the main sort of beats of the story quite closely. It really tries to honour the central thematic discussion of Ibsen's play and put that in a new context. But in other ways we've had to make massive changes. So the play now, or rather our play, is set in a small de-industrialised Scottish town, the gender of the two leads is reversed. There's one particular character called Aslaksen who's very different than he is in the original, and a lot of the characters have been shed. Ours is 90-minutes straight-through with a cast of six. So there's been some big changes, but a lot of those are actually, they come from trying

to most accurately translate through the geography and time of the original story. So for example, why is it set in this de-industrialised town, and why is it about having this massive conversation about regeneration to do with the Big Splash resort? Well the original is set in a rural Norwegian spa town that is famous for the life-giving properties of its water. And that's why that's central to its economy. Now that needs to be central to its economy for the story to work, because a poison is found in the water and the mayor says "absolutely not, people can't find out about this." So in the earliest stages of adaptation you're asking yourself "what is the equivalent in Scotland in the 21st century that can make that work?" And the first thing we thought of was that maybe it was fracking, maybe there's a small town and fracking has come in. But it just didn't land right at all, because there's too much popular opposition to fracking. It just didn't make sense that everyone would be like "booo, frack our town!" That didn't make any sense. So you're scratching away for what this equivalent to the 19th century town is, and there isn't one. There isn't a town in Scotland that's famous for the life-giving properties of its water. So the equivalent that we could land on is you'd take a small de-industrialised town that maybe used to have industry but hasn't had much since the '80s, there are towns like that all across Scotland, we recognise that in Scotland. And instead of there being these baths, there's a top-down regeneration project happening, with loads of money being invested into the town: government money, private money, to build this massive Trump Turnbury-scale indoor beach resort, that's going to transform the economy of the town. And the people have been convinced that this is a good idea, because it's going to bring jobs and dignity. And suddenly that begins to work, the story can happen there. So it means that we have this whole conversation in the play that isn't in Ibsen's play, about the nature of regeneration in the 21st century, about the power dynamics and the politics of that. But the reason we're doing that is because that's the closest analogue we could hit upon for what's going on in the original, so it looks really different but that's an attempt to repurpose something of the original in a new context.

Ally Aslaksen the character in *The Enemy*, the character he's drawn from in the original is a guy called Aslaksen who is the president of the Homeowner's Association, and the chair of the Temperance Society. So he's someone who commands huge influence over the voting population of the town. Now Ibsen plays him as a bit of a comedy figure, because he's played as this very dull bore, this man with traditional good Christian values, very much not a socialite at all, a very dull, boring, good honourable man. But he commands influence over the town because of his status as the president of the Homeowner's Society. So for his position in the story to make sense he needs to be someone who commands influence over the voting public, over the population. And for us that was just that he was a local celebrity- in these towns you sometimes have local celebrities that become big media personalities or musicians, maybe he was on *Pop Idol* or *Fame Academy* or something. And they command influence because people are proud of them, and in the 21st century in the world of social media, they often maintain careers through their own channels and platforms, and become essentially a social media influencer. So our Ally Aslaksen is the polar opposite of Aslaksen from the Ibsen, but that's not just because we want to make some kind of funny contemporary gag about influencers; it's because in Ibsen's play there's a character whose role in the story is to command a huge amount of influence over the public. That's who he is. And so for us we just needed a different version of that. Similarly with the social media stuff, we're not just trying to be contemporary, relevant, and quirky by showing tweets on stage. If we're going to talk about how people are vilified in the public eye, how a person who was seen as a hero can quickly be seen as a villain, then there's no way to have that conversation in the UK in the 21st century without that being about getting cancelled online. That's just a huge part of how opinion functions. So all of these "super relevant" things in the play aren't really attempts to be relevant for the sake of it, they're genuine attempts to address what's happening in Ibsen's play and repurpose that for the context we find ourselves in now. So that's what's going on there.

Putting on a literal translation of the Ibsen now would be a really valid thing to do. It's just not what we were doing; we were writing a new play, telling a new story set in a small town in Scotland now. And the way that I've always approached the language of characters, how they speak, I'm just writing

how people speak. I'm writing the way people have always spoken around me. People often ask me about swearing in my plays, and it always catches me a little off-guard, because I'm not trying to do some kind of bolshy, edgy thing. This is just how people always spoke all around me when I was growing up. If young people start asking me about that then maybe that's something worth me listening to. Maybe the ways young people, teenagers are speaking are changing. I'm 35 now, maybe it's different! But for me with Petra dropping all those "see-you-next-Tuesdays", she speaks like that because for her not to speak like that would be unusual for me. It would be a very conscious decision for me to make her not speak like that, so what am I doing with that decision? For me it would be a case of, if the whole script came out with no swear words at all, it would be an unnatural language, that would be not how people speak in my experience. Especially not how people speak when they're under immense pressure, which you hope to at least sometimes find them in when you're writing a drama. For me, if the thing was entirely free of swear words that would be the question: why that? Because that's an odd and unnatural and highly stylised decision around how to speak. I guess with Petra there is maybe an element, if I'm being honest, of a little bit of shock value there. But it's to draw out something of the story, to draw out something of who she is in this. There's a gag at the top - the play's littered with jokes - but there's a gag at the top of the play in the first scene where she drops a C-bomb, and it shocks her mum, and she makes the point that it's just how people speak here. Now there's a bit of a truism that in Scotland people can use that word in a way that is much more relaxed and informal, almost just like punctuation, than it is received in other parts of the English-speaking world like in England or America. It's about drawing out that gag which is an opportunity - you're trying to set up so much in the first scene, you're trying to tell the audience so much about who these people are but you're trying to do it in a way that doesn't look like you're telling them about who these people are. So it's an opportunity in that scene to draw out a little comment from Petra as she's speaking to Kirsten about her efforts to try to fit in, about her status as an outsider, about the fact that they've recently moved, and you do that with a joke. You play it as a joke so that it's a laugh so that it doesn't feel like expositional dialogue. So yeah maybe in that instance, having the character use that word early on in the play is a bit of a deliberate choice to draw out a reaction, but it's part of an attempt to tell the story. It has a function. Similarly, it's also setting some of the terms. One of the things you're also trying to do in the first scene is establish some of the rules of the performance, and again not in a too heavy-handed way, so that the audience can understand what this is and they're with you. So it was really important that we had a text message appear on screen in the first scene, so that when that comes 20 minutes later it's not like "what's this?" Similarly it's really important for me to drop a C-word in the first scene because then people that have come thinking - now the marketing handles most of this - but then people that have come to see Ibsen are maybe just gently told "well you're seeing something a bit different actually" And there's a choice there to guide the audience with that.

Earlier I spoke about me and Finn developing a pitch, taking that to various people, eventually to the National Theatre of Scotland who were interested in the ideas there. The next thing that happens there is they give me what's called a commission to write the play. But before that, because this was an idea that began with Finn and began very much in a conversation between the writer and the director, it felt quite important to maintain that. So before I went away to write the script, which is something I did, me and Finn spent a week together in a room here at NTS with a translated version of the original. We did a lot of big paper on walls, mapping things out, drawing on things...And so there was a lot of conversation with him about the kind of piece we were making so that there was a kind of shared perspective and vision over what it was we were doing before I went off to write. So when Finn gets back a play- it runs to an hour and a half, the first draft of the script probably would've run at 2 hours- but Finn gets back something that's essentially one long play straight through, no interval, not breaking down into acts like the original was, only six characters. Petra is now a sixteen year old as opposed to an adult woman, in the original Petra's a teacher - when he gets all of those changes they're not a surprise to him. That's not something I've just gone away and done and he's like "this isn't what we're doing!" So that's an important part of the process between a writer and a director on a task like this if the director's already in place, which he was.

After that point... there's a process of writing and rewriting. If you're working professionally as a writer without doing other things then you've probably got a few other projects on the go, so it can take a while. Rosie Kellagher here at National Theatre of Scotland, who's the Literary Manager or Dramaturg here, would feedback notes from herself and the team, so you'd get organisational notes back, you'd get notes back from Finn, you'd go away and do another rewrite. And that's the process for a little while, until we all agree that we've got a script. In and through that process, it's worth saying, there were two very significant moments of R&D with actors in the room. R&D is what we call research and development time. So we're not in rehearsals yet, we're exploring the play and the project with a bunch of other collaborators and peers and co-workers. And that'll include actors, but also the beginnings of the design team maybe. People are coming round for a table read and beginning to develop ideas.

All of this is happening before we're going into rehearsal, so there's something that's beginning to grow there. And as a writer you learn loads about what it is you've done in those periods, especially as a writer for performance and theatre. What you're doing as a writer isn't ever complete on the page. You can work away between you and the page for ages, but it's only ever complete when it becomes someone's breath. You're writing for something that happens in space and time, in three dimensions, and you can learn so much more about it by hearing it aloud. Actors understand plays much better, intuitively, than writers do. So you do your R&D with the actors, you make lots of cuts when you realise you don't need this thing or that thing, a whole bunch of stuff like I was explaining earlier of trying things out in scene 1 to do something, you can decide well actually this one didn't work and that did work and so on. So you're editing and rewriting as you go. Until eventually you have a script that you're all to go into rehearsal happy with. Then at that process if it's a new script like this one, often what's going to happen is you're going to get a whole load more rewrites in the first week of rehearsal, because you're still in that process of finding out more about it as it becomes three dimensional, as it becomes a big living, breathing thing. And as other elements come into play later on in the process - you have four weeks rehearsal normally, and then you go into tech week. And that is when we start moving out of the rehearsal room and into a theatre space and we start building all of the bells and whistles of the show.

The actors are now working on the set, the lighting design's moving from being something abstract and theoretical to something real, and it's all coming to life. Even then you end up finding things that you don't need anymore, things that change slightly, because the way it works in the space is slightly different. So there's a fine-tuning, editing going on right until the last minute, and the actors need to be real pros about that, because that's really challenging for them. So the actors are getting line changes after first preview, which is the first time that we show the work to a paying audience, so in many ways it's opening night. The tickets are cheaper and it's called a preview and we don't have press in yet, but you have people paying money to come and see the work, so you're live, you're go. Even after first preview some of the actors are still getting line changes. So it's a constantly evolving thing, and there just comes a point... If anyone ever reads the published play, you can play a game of spot the difference between what's in your hand, because that is where the play was at when the hard publishing deadline just had to happen. The publishers have their own deadline, they need to get it to the printers, and back to the theatre in time to sell it as a programme text. So they have their own deadlines, but the editing that keeps happening on the play keeps happening after that point, so you will always find a difference between what you heard on stage that night that you were in, and what's in your hand if you're coming to see a brand-new play. Not always, but if you're coming to see one of mine, always. So that's the process.

THE ENEMY | FINN

It was actually quite an unusual process this one, because we did it in two chunks. Due to the nature of this year and scheduling things being changed a bit. So we rehearsed for two weeks in July, and that first two weeks was really concentrating heavily on the script – pulling apart the script and working with Kieran to find ways to rewrite certain things, to make sure that the script was doing exactly what we wanted it to do; to make sure it was the right length and scenes were the right length. That first little while was very much about text based work – talking about the characters, working with the actors to develop their characters. Through talking about their feelings about who these characters were, and maybe referencing people that they thought they were like - within their own lives, within popular culture, within the wider world of Scotland and the political world in Scotland - really getting a group understanding of the world and the characters within that world. And the town – the imaginary town of the piece – we talked a lot about that. Where that might be; what that might be like; what the industry there would have been. So we created this kind of imagined world of the place, as I say through conversations, through dialogue with the actors and with Kieran.

And then in the second week of that first period of rehearsals we just started to vaguely stage it. I'm a great believer in getting something up on its feet quickly. You learn a lot about it. We got it up, we weren't sort of sitting about talking for a long time, we got up and started working quite quickly. By the end of that first two weeks we had a rough sketch of what the play was going to look like. We then had a break of two months really while I had to go away and work on another show. And so when we came back we kind of hit the ground running because we knew the shape of the piece – we knew who the main characters were, the script was kind of set in stone, the actors had began to learn it. So we just had this two weeks to really play with revisiting all the scenes again, looking at them a bit more in depth, and letting the actors play the scenes out because they understood the characters much better now, they understood the relationships really well because they'd had this time away. So the second half was all just on-its-feet practical work – and also physical work. We had a movement director on the piece who did all of the transitions in-and-out of scenes, there was a big sequence where lots of chairs get moved about the stage and a sequence where the Big Splash resort was revealed, so we had to work all of that out with the movement director. So that was the second phase. And obviously then putting all the technology into stuff as well. The skype calls and the video stuff and the text messages – we had to work out the timings of all of that. So that was in the second half of rehearsals because obviously that takes a while for the Video Designer to create that content. That gets kind of rehearsed as we're rehearsing the acting as well. It was in two chunks but I guess it was three stages, I would say. Script work, world building, and then the physical making of the play. I don't necessarily use specific techniques. I tend to kind of employ a lot of – asking a lot of questions of the actors, really. I think we've all got experiences that we draw on; relationships that we have in our lives that are similar to the relationships that are playing out in the play. With Gabe and Hannah who played Vonny and Kirsten – I know them both very well, or I've worked with them a lot, so I was able to ask them questions about their own lives. Not in a way that felt like I was probing them or asking them anything that they were uncomfortable with. I just wanted them to talk about their lives and how their lives relate to the characters in the play. Both Gabe and Hannah happen to have sisters, so they found it very easy to remember what it's like to have these arguments with a sister. Neither of them – they're not politicians or scientists – those are harder things to try and imagine yourselves into, than just an argument with a sibling.

We were interested in the fact that while the play deals with these big themes and these big issues, really at heart it's about people and families. If you're having an argument with your sibling – whether that's a brother, a sister, older or younger – it gets heated, it gets frantic, it gets nasty and messy. That's why I think it felt believable because it didn't feel like two characters speaking about themes within a play, it felt like two people scrapping with each other. That's what I always pushed and encouraged Hannah and Gabe to find. We talked about the thing of letting it be ugly and letting it be

scrappy, not being too refined and austere, and proper. It needs to have that kind of messiness to it, because that's what families have. Hopefully those were the techniques –encouraging people to go into themselves and go into what they would be like in that situation, imagine yourself in that situation, that's what acting is really: just imagining yourself in a situation. I'm not someone who does loads of exercises or employs techniques that I've read in books or whatever. I just tend to go: "who is the person in front of me and how do I bring them to the character?"

A big theme in the play is truth. Who has the power to tell that truth? Themes of power, and who holds that power, and themes of people keeping the truth from other people – so deceiving them. Truth, power, deception: they do seem like big themes in the play. They're also big themes in the world at the moment – and in the world all the time – but they certainly felt very current when we were making this work. So how I directed those things to give them impact it was about just going: "what are the stakes around things like truth and power, and how do we make those stakes feel really felt?" The way that you make something impactful is to make an audience feel like this is really important – what is happening on-stage right now is really important. This play is literally a case of life or death when Kirsten discovers the poison in the water. For her, this truth – having this truth and telling this truth is hugely important. The way that I directed that was to make sure that everybody was playing the level of the stage. If you go, "she's got an email that she's not very happy about – never mind", that's not going to make an impact! What has an impact is: this is the most important email she's ever read, this scene that she's about to have with her sister where she has to tell her – this is the most difficult scene she's ever had, this day – because it all takes place over one day – is the hardest day of her life!

If you bring the stakes up really high... Because I don't think you can really direct themes, you can't direct ideas, what you direct is relationships between people. You direct the situations that people find themselves in. If you bring the heat of those situations up to their highest, you'll see how that situation vibrates at its highest setting. Sometimes you want to turn that down, sometimes you want to put a gag in so that it lightens it a bit. Really, it's about directing what the writer has written and I was lucky enough to work with a writer like Kieran who collaborates. He and I worked together in going, "how do I make these themes so present in the situation that they will have impact?" The play was originally supposed to be done in village halls – town halls around Scotland – pre-pandemic that's where it was going to be. So it was going to tour to various town halls. And it was site specific. It was automatically a one-room sort of setting. When it was rescheduled and put into theatres we decided we wanted to maintain some of that aesthetic – some of the design decisions we made when it was going to be these town halls. That kind of led us to do this one-room set thing. For me, personally, I'm quite interested in non-literal design in theatre. So if you're in a house, does it have to look like a house? If you're in an office, does it have to look like an office? There was something about this room: it was neither Kirsten's kitchen and living room, nor was it Vonny's office, it wasn't any of the spaces – but it was recognisably a civic hall space, what I hoped was that it would put in the audience's head this idea of a civic space which is being used for things that it wouldn't normally be used for, which is what you find when you go into these village halls. They were once places where town meetings took place but now people have weddings in them, or Christmas parties, or whatever. The civic and the corporate have kind of become one and that's very much one of the themes of the play. We decided to have this big open space that could read as anything, therefore when they're in a cafe, they use the chairs that you might use in a village hall to represent a cafe. These trestle tables become a kitchen table and an office table and a cafe table. It's this sort of non-literal design world that does say something about the themes in the play, without being a direct reference to any of the spaces the play takes place in. The use of technology in the play was something that we always knew was going to be there.

When Kieran and I first started looking at adapting *An Enemy of the People* into a 21st-century context we knew immediately that social media had to play a part. All online media had to play a part. The original play, there's a whole act that Ibsen gets out of, "will the newspaper print the story?"

Of course, in 21st century language that doesn't work, doesn't make sense – because people can publish whatever they like online. We knew that that was something we wanted to be part of the fabric of the piece, and therefore part of the design language of the piece as well. For me, I find the use of cameras and filming on stage really exciting anyway. One of the things that excites me about theatre is that we can bring together all of these worlds – sometimes it can be dance, sometimes it can be film, sometimes it can be theatre, it can be like a gig, but it can be all of these things at once in a way that I don't think all art forms can be. So I was always excited about using film cameras on the stage. There was also something about the fact that the way we were reimagining it was sort of like a thriller – it felt at points like a television thriller. Yeah, we wanted it to have this feeling of a TV thriller so that kind of led us to use the cameras as well, and that's why there was all this live camera stuff in it. But also this idea that we're always being filmed, the phone that you have in your pocket has a camera on it. People are always filming each other, people are putting stuff online all the time. This multimedia cacophony, this overwhelming noise of cameras and tweets and texts – that's how we live our lives now, and that becomes another overwhelming element in Kirsten's struggle to get the truth out there. Everyone has an opinion, everyone's filming her, everyone's got footage of her or whatever – it's all there and available as a means of destroying her.

So it felt like it was always going to be a character in the play, the technology, and hopefully a really exciting one for an audience. Because it's this old old play, it's a 150 year-old play, it's had an influence on lots of things since it was first on until now. One of the main ones being *Jaws* which we talked a lot about in the lead up to it. And it's mentioned in the play, the fact that the first half of *Jaws* is basically the same story as *An Enemy of the People*. There's a character who wants to close down the beaches, stop things from happening, and then the mayor who says: "no, we have to keep the beaches open for financial and economic reasons." So that's the same dichotomy – the same struggle – that's in the middle of *An Enemy of the People*. And so of course that's a very well-known cultural trope now, so that has an influence even though, weirdly, you're kind of closing the feedback loop there: because the thing that influences our thing is actually influenced by the thing that our thing is based on. So it kind of does a nice circle. Also we had a lot of references to Scandinavian television, films... because the original play is from Norway, we had a lot of references visually to crime drama, and the soundscapes kind of felt like that as well. There was also, from a theatre point of view, the use of multimedia comes from a lot of theatre that I've seen from Holland, Belgium and Germany. They use a lot of multimedia in their theatre, so that was definitely a reference point as well. There's a long history of using that kind of camerawork in theatre from these exciting theatre companies in Europe. So that was a reference point as well. Our social reference points were Scotland. Whilst it's this Norwegian play, it had a kind of European feeling to it, it was very Scottish. It was set in a west coast of Scotland, post-industrial place. Where people have been forsaken a lot of the time – by councils and governments –and are desperate for something new to come in and bring life back to a community. That feels very real and I think a lot of people recognised that in the play, and recognised that in the production. That is something we were aware of when making it. Sometimes it was described as a radical reimagining, and sometimes it was described as being very faithful to the original. I think it was both. The words that are on the page – well some of them are the same as Ibsen's,

there's probably ands and buts in both of them, but Kieran completely rewrote the script. He didn't stick line-by-line to the structure of the original. But he was very faithful to the plot of the original. It's very good, very well-plotted, story-telling in the original play. There are very clear parallels because it's the same story, and weirdly the story doesn't feel irrelevant. A 150 year-old story still feels relevant today and that's a really exciting thing, even maybe slightly scary thing. The problems we face are still the same. In saying that, I just worked on a 2000 year-old Greek play that also has a lot of the same problems that we seem to be having now.

It's great when you find those parallels that just come up again and again. Again, because it's humans. It's about human nature, it's about people, and people tend to do the same things again and again. If people were to go back and look at the original, the differences are clearer. We've made ours take place over

the course of one day, we made the two central characters sisters rather than brothers, we took out a few characters that felt extraneous.

But really, it's still about somebody who learns the truth, tries to get it out there, at first is considered a hero and then is demonised and destroyed by a public that turns on them. The relationship between the playwright and the director is a very important one. If you're lucky enough to work with a generous writer like Kieran then it's a really exciting collaboration. We came to this project at exactly the same time. It wasn't like he'd written the play and brought it to me to direct – which is sometimes the relationship, where you're realising the vision of the playwright. With this, we were working on a vision together. If I had an idea that I wanted to try, for example a scene set in a car park that we were going to film – Kieran would write that into the play, so that we could make it work. It was about serving the story, serving the play, rather than serving an extreme vision of the writer, an extreme vision of the director. I think the relationship is about coming together to make the best show for the audience – it's what that relationship needs to be about. What I wanted the audience to take away from *The Enemy* is to have an enjoyable night at the theatre, frankly. I think that everybody brings their own things to a show. I certainly don't want to go, "here is the message of the play." The themes and the message are clear in this play, and maybe clearer even now, living through the pandemic.

When somebody puts economics ahead of public health, or somebody puts prestige or their own public image ahead of public health – that's a problem, as we've seen in the last two years. But I didn't want people to come and take away that fact, because they already know that. What I wanted them to come away from this thinking was: "that was an exciting story well told, those were exciting relationships that I saw on stage, those actors were brilliant, that was cool when the set opened and the balloons came down." Really I want people to have a good time when they're watching theatre, more than to take away any message.

THE ENEMY | JEN

The play travels through several different locations and it culminates in this big event at the Big Splash launch, which would be in the sort of community centre, the town hall. It became evident quite quickly with the director, Finn, and myself it felt like having the town hall almost as the base in which all the different areas of the story could happen in. It's roughly based around the civic space that's another key word that the director gave me. It was a toss up between the civic spaces and the corporate spaces, them clashing with each other is a theme throughout the show. So the set had a similar layout to a community centre, in which it had a wooden floor area – kind of a dance floor, kind of work floor area with a carpet around it.

Then the design of the wooden slats in the set is really similar to what you can see in loads of 70s –or new build – offices, town halls, some homes. There's a gentle Scandinavian nod to it, which is interesting with the original history and story of the play. Then we were able to put things like the sink on one side – which felt like it could be in a community or civic space, but also work for the house – and then shelves and storage spaces on the other side – which could also work for the offices. So having this one room set, that then the back wall at the end slides open and becomes the stage platform for the Big Splash launch. In the space we had the wooden floor with the carpet around it. That was good at delineating different spaces. When it was on the wooden floor it could become other places, like the cafe they go to, or the pub. And the carpet could be more domestic spaces. It was sort of modular, so there was two bookend flats, and then there was also LED batons built into the wood, which was great in terms of Catherine Williams, the lighting designer, could light up certain baton, to create certain spaces within the one big space. There were multiple cameras on the set. There was one based about hip height, just on top of the shelves where the plants and the box cells were in the office space. There was another one built into the bookend flat just behind where the laptop sat, so it looks like it's the laptop webcam being used but actually it's a hidden camera built into the set. Across from that, up high, there was another camera that was pointed down into the space. And at the back of the stage, where you had the two hidden spaces – the podcast studio that was stage right, and the carpark space which was stage left – they both had cameras pointing in from the wings, in order to get those two shots. That leads up to there being the big projection screen above, which again feels similar to the kind of thing you can see in community centres and town halls, but also at a corporate launch.

It was an interesting process in that, due to Covid, I designed the show in the first two weeks of rehearsal in response to what the director, Finn, was working on in the room. Instinctually we could see that spaces like inside the house felt very on the stage, and scenes like the offices – there was scenes that felt right for being on stage. And the other ones being hidden and off felt like the carpark and Ally's podcast studio – we wanted that to be still on stage but could be projected somewhere else. Let's start with Ally's podcast studio. That was at the back of the set, and you could very vaguely see through the lines in the wood that there was a space behind it, and that's where we placed him. The way that works is it meant he could get off stage and on stage without being seen by the camera, and then he could appear on the set. You would get glimmers of movement behind there, so he was still in the action of the play while being somewhere else. Then on the other side, we had the carpark. That was a surprise scene as well. When we first saw it on the camera, you wouldn't know where it was. You knew it was somewhere on stage, it was somewhere in the space, and then the door opens and you realise it's at the back of the set going into the room. That was a thing that Finn and I really wanted to make happen, was that element of surprise in that moment, where it's this big reveal and she's blackmailing the character. Seeing it on the screen and all of a sudden they stepped into the space, and that's something we really really wanted to happen. The way we made that work was, both of those spaces were set on steel deck which had wheels on the bottom of them so that both of them could wheel off for the reveal of the Big Splash launch. There wasn't a lot of space on either side, but that's how we made it work: both of them were on their own

separate decks that moved apart. Behind that, it meant the stage for the Big Splash launch could come through. That was something we developed in the room, because normally the process of a play is that you would get it and go away and come up with the design ready for the first day of rehearsals. But due to Covid and starting back really quickly we didn't have that, so it was a case of designing in situ. Seeing what the actors and the director were needing in the room and designing around that, which was really exciting and totally unusual.

The first time I read the script it became really clear there were at least ten different locations. One of the ways when you've got any show like that, in my process I tend to write down all the locations and try to find a common denominator that can be used between all of them. It also felt like the pace of Kieran Hurley's writing was really quick, it didn't feel like the space had time for any big set transitions or movements. It was really fast. And actually the thing that would make the space transform into other things would be use of props or the use of furniture, and those being brought on.

And from working with the director, Finn, before – this was one of the first shows coming back after Covid, and this play feels like it could be a good television crime drama, or thriller, and we wanted that feeling – but we also wanted the audience to be using their theatre imagination again. So it's not giving them every single element of realism and having to – the thing as an audience member when you're watching it and you make up the world around the characters based on what's on stage. So the audience are doing a bit of the work as well, which is actually a bit more interesting, and it's more theatrical. So that was a massive factor in it: using your theatrical brain again after months of watching film and television. It felt like – again, at the start of the process - the community halls and the civic spaces were a really good base and a good setting for all the different action to happen in. And that's really interesting as well, because this play was originally, pre-Covid, meant to go out to community centres and town halls. It was originally designed by Rosanna Vize, and she and Finn had come up with a concept of taking this to all the town halls and centres. We had to take some of the concepts about folding tables that you'd find in town halls, the red plush chairs, and then find a way of getting that feeling of those civic spaces and putting it in a proscenium arch end-on space for these audiences. And that would tie us then back into this culminating moment of the Big Splash launch, where we have this big moment and this big outspill, and that feeling like it all culminates and leads up to that point in the play. It nods back to a lot more about using your theatrical brain.

When you watch a set that, say, transforms from one location to another with a lot of detail it becomes quite filmic, and quite similar to film and television. Actually when you use a one room set, and you use very specific objects or props to help the story telling, and the actors use their physicality to create spaces themselves in the way they act. You use your imagination. I think that's it: it's getting the audience to use the theatrical part of their brain, to use their imaginations to fill in the gaps where you can't have a fully realistic kitchen, but you know it is that, because you've got the tap that works, you've got the cast sat on chairs – that maybe aren't the sort of chairs you would get in a kitchen, but they treat it as such. That's something that was really nice looking at it in the room and seeing, these are the tables we've got, these are the chairs we've got, how does that look? Does that look like a car, if you put two chairs next to each other? It doesn't look like a car initially, but will it look like a car if we put a camera angle on it? And then going, yes, that actually does feel like a car. I love being able to use a one room set because it becomes more about the feeling of the play, rather than feeding the audience everything. It's much more about feeling and tone instead. The feeling of this play... that clash between the civic world and the corporate world, and I think that's what our space did.

The first time I read a script I try not to write any notes. I just want to get a sense of the feelings it evokes in me. That would be the first time I read the script. The second time I'll do a textual analysis breakdown of it. A lot of that comes from writing lists: I'll write lists of locations, lists of characters, lists of props. I'll also write a list of the feelings that I'm getting as well. That means later down the process when I'm starting to develop things I can always go back to my lists and think, have I ticked off – it needs to do this space, it needs to do that space. Have I ticked off – is that prop right for this

character? It's almost a case of just writing down a lot in order to get it out of your head, and it allows your creative brain to go off and do something else. Once I've got those lists down I'll go to the director – so I went to Finn – and we had another conversation about what the space needed to do. Because this text had lived in Finn's head for so long he had a really good grasp of what he needed the space to do and what it needed to feel like. It's a bit different with this process because we had to design it in the rehearsal room in the first two weeks. But then the next step is doing research. So finding images of spaces that would be similar to the play, places that would be similar to the play, people...

Whether that's through books, or you might find a visual reference from watching a television show, you might see something in the museum, you might see someone walking down the street. It can totally come from anywhere. It's keeping your eyes and ears open and going down rabbit holes of trying find things. With this show, we found actually the images of the wooden slats were so common in community centres and architecture in Scotland, but also in Scandinavian countries and Scandinavian design. It felt like a really good fit for the play. It kind of felt like the two different worlds of the play combining into one. Then I normally would start making a model box. Model boxes take an incredible amount of time. With this, we did it digitally on the computer, the model, so it meant I could sit in the room and work on the computer as they were rehearsing and see what was happening. It's really good now, I think digital models are becoming more prevalent because the cost and the time, but also environmentally they're more sustainable, and it's easier to pass on digital models in terms of giving drawings to builders. They don't suit everyone, digital models, but they're becoming more used in theatre. And it's programs like Google SketchUp – you can get a free version of that, and anyone can have a play on it – instead of the traditional 1:25 scale model.

Then we go through costume. In terms of costume design, it's notes on characters. A lot of this felt like modern, contemporary people so we were looking at modern female politicians, and looking at people you would expect to find in towns in the west of Scotland. Again, your references, it's about thinking of the feeling and what it looks like, and whether or not you find that on something like Pinterest, or it's in a book, or it's in a film that you've seen, and then being able to relay that to your director and making sure you're both on the same page. Finn's a really good visual director as well, he'll show me images of things that have popped into his head. It doesn't always have to be the designer showing images, the director might say, "I've got a feeling of something that's in my head – it looks like this". And that's a great way in of trying to find out what the space and what the characters are going to look like. Then it gets built. You work with your builders and costume supervisor to find all of these, and you present it to the cast normally on the first day of rehearsals, but actually it was on the third week of rehearsals that we did that. And then it gets realised and all of a sudden you've got a show!

It's one thing to design a space that's viewed end-on by an audience, but because of camera angles we were shooting a lot into wing space, or cameras will be picking up other parts of scenes. So say cast members coming on that we didn't want to see on-screen because they were in a different space in the room. So actually, maybe given hindsight or a bit more time to develop what the set looked like on-camera - when it was pointing into the wing space- instead of seeing a lot more of the black tabs and things like that, if I could do the show again I'd want to develop more about what the set looked like on camera, and from those different camera angles. Rather than just focussing on what I normally do for my job – focussing on what the audience see when they're sat in the theatre looking in one direction. And actually think, so they're going to see a camera pointing that way, so the set on the camera is going to look like this. Maybe I should add something in here? Or do I want to hide something somewhere else? Which is a lot of work considering you've got four or five cameras. There are loads of theatre makers who do that really well. One of the ones would be Katie Mitchell as a director, in that you see space end-on, and the cameras within the space when you see the interiors of these rooms it looks really realistic and really full and the visual compositions are really

strong. I think that's something I would want to explore more as part of the process of working with AV again.

Again, the set had to be pretty modular because we were touring from spaces like The Beacon in Greenock, and Eden Court, and the King's Theatre in Edinburgh which are massive, and then the last venue of the tour was Perth – the footprint of that stage comes in by about 3 ½ – 4 meters on either side. So the set had to be able to have a compact version, so it was almost like... the set where the sink was, they were all units that could then be moved in. And a chunk of the floor could be cut out so it was squeezed. I think it's hard isn't it? When you're trying to design a show you have to be aware of all the different spaces, and when they are so different it means you have to design something that's modular without it feeling modular.

THE ENEMY | GABE AND TAQI

I play a character called Vonny Stockmann, who is a local politician, but she's a provost so she's the head of the council basically, in a small town in Scotland that... that she wants to push on its way up. It's a very very important day in her life because she's launching the town as a city of regeneration – so she's trying to move the town up – but she's also launching a big big resort, a water park resort, that's going to bring lots of things to the town. So it's a very big day for her. She's a politician and she's very good at her job. She's on the way up, in her mind.

I play Ali Aslaksen who is a social media influencer. He's from the town – this fictional town in Scotland – and he has everyone's ear, everyone listens to him. He's previously a pop star, and we were discussing this, he was a pop star, I think he had a number one hit – maybe he tried to get a second hit - didn't quite work out -but people know who he is. He's always on twitter or instagram. On this day he's getting the whole town involved for this bid for city of regeneration. He's part of the media drive really. Everyone, particularly Vonny, comes to him to get the word out. He's quite fundamental to the play and the world that we're in.

GABE: There were workshops done on the show, and then we start rehearsals properly. In the workshops they looked at the original play – An Enemy of the People by Henrik Ibsen – and we read the play, the original play, and you could see who you were and how the writer has updated it. That was the first thing. Then you were looking at how you play your part, how you play a politician, so you're looking at the rhythms of politicians – how they speak. So for me, I would be looking at Nicola Sturgeon, all female politicians, and male, and how they deliver when they're on. So you're looking at private Vonny and public Vonny. There's two sides of it that you get to see in the play. The public one – with you, we have a scene together where he's the presenter – and I get my message across. Politicians always have buzz words and phrases and they make sure they get to say it, by hook or by crook. And the rhythms of their speech means they punch certain phrases harder. So she does things in the play like: "repeated, failed, promises." But when it's private Vonny, she doesn't speak like that. Even in terms of her costume, when she's on professionally the coat is on, the coat is big, it's to give power. A structured dress, high heels – the vanity and the ego of the politician. You've got all that decision to be made in the rehearsal room. And private Vonny, you notice in the play, she kicks her shoes off, and it's like "I can't believe this is happening to me." And she can talk to her sister normally, as it were. You're looking at the facets of the whole character, and how you many ways you can show that. Voice is very important in that as well.

TAQI: I think for myself in rehearsals, very much what Gabe said. I'm playing a presenter, so I had a reference of Dermott O'Leary – that was my reference. After about two or three weeks I had a bit of a "yay!" moment because the director, Finn, came up to me and went, "you're a bit like Dermott O'Leary" and I was like "get in!" But that's what it was, because what you're seeing as a presenter is a facade you're putting on, and it's getting those rhythms right, those techniques right. What words are you hitting? And why? What we find with Ally is that he's jotted throughout the play. Kieran Hurley's text is actually quite unforgiving. It's very direct, there's not much ambiguity going on, and it's quite dense.

GABE: [agreeing] There's really long sentences in this play, so some sentences are so long – it's political polemic, but you're trying to vest it with the personal at the same time.

TAQI: It's informative, and you cannot miss out that information. If you miss out that information the audience are going to miss something. Particularly for Vonny and Ally, we have to make sure the information we're getting out has a rhythm, it lands, and certainly from a rehearsal point of view, our diction lands. With Dermott O'Leary as a reference, and with Ally jotted throughout, I had to really work with: "OK what's Ally's stakes in each situation? What's he bringing? What information is he

bringing to the audience? And we can clearly mark out his journey. Certainly in the rehearsal process – when you first get the play you read it, you play around with it, you're slowly tweaking it during the three or four weeks to bring it onto a performative level. For me, it is about finding out what's at stake at each point. At each point I get bits of information. At one point it's right, at one point it's wrong. What does that do on Ally's journey? And what does that represent for this town? All the way up to the end. He stands up against you.

GABE: He does. He's one of the most moral by the end.

TAQI: We think he's immoral, actually, because he's going along with it. Only because he doesn't have the information, and it is trial by twitter – and I think that's a great analogy for what we have nowadays, especially with Ally. He doesn't really interact with anybody at all. It's very two dimensional. But we're like that nowadays – we're all on our phones, we're all on instagram or twitter or facebook.

GABE: He's always in his booth.

TAQI: Exactly. I think it's a great representation of where we are as a society now. Particularly with your character – where are we with politics? We could go on forever about that. But that's an idea for rehearsal process, and where my thinking was – and how that can change constantly. It's key to get all the way to the end. All the characters were like that, particularly ours.

GABE: They're all on a mission. We were directed to be fast and hard. So once you're on the train, you're on the train. The director was like: "speed." And with that speed comes diction, clarity. Speed and punch to communicate the story across. It's a very stressful day – one day.

TAQI: That's what I was going to say: it's one day. All this happens in less than 24 hours. It starts at 8am and it finishes around 8 or 9pm. So it's not even one day – it's 12 – 14 hours, all this drama takes place.

GABE: And he said, "if you're not feeling stressed by the end of the show, something's wrong."

GABE: Scene six is a scene between Vonny and her sister, Kirsten, when I have been told via email that there's a problem with the water. So Vonny is coming on with a lot of baggage of what's happening and the stress about what's going to happen today. She hasn't made a decision, so the progression of scene six is her making the decision to go, "aye do you know what? We're not going to say anything, and we're going to go ahead." It's not certain that's what she thinks at the beginning of the scene, but as the scene progresses and her sister says a couple of things that make her think – you know, she talks about crowdfunding – and the realities as a politician are like, "you're so naive", so she begins to think, "oh my god she's an idiot, I've got to do this I've got to do this." And she's in panic mode as well, so she decides to go ahead and poison the town, because she thinks it will be better for the long-term good. It's a brilliant scene to play because it's a two-hander – hammer and tongs – and it's lengthy so you can really progress through the scene. It should have a journey: if I come in at the beginning of the scene knowing exactly that I'm going to do it, that isn't going to be as interesting dramatically. So the director was like, "let's have it that" – because it could be done that way – he said "let's have it that she's not sure yet what she's going to do." And then she says "yes, I'm going to make this decision." That's a major key moment. Once she's made that decision there's a spiral down, and she basically throws away family in favour of her political career. She sees it as common good. For her, it's to save the town. For Vonny in that scene, you see that she really does mean it, she really does care about the town. She really does think, "I can do this and I can make a difference." That's in her head. Hopefully what the audience sees is Vonny thinking about herself.

TAQI: What I like about that scene, certainly from Vonny's point of view, is we see a chink in your armor and we see a chink in your ego. The switch towards the end of that scene, where Kirsten puts

the water down, that twists it, and you can see Vonny going, "game on." It's an ego thing: you're going, "you know what, even if the water is gone, I'm going to prove you wrong." That shows the personality of Vonny, that's exciting to see.

GABE: Exactly, and the whole throughline for Vonny in the play is that she's the older sister. She's used to having to look after her sometimes, and having that familial relationship overriding everything really helps. It's like, "you don't push me around because I'm the big sister." [Laughs] It is as simple as that sometimes. And that's learned behaviour as well: you're the wee one and I'm the big one and that's the way the relationships in the family are. So when she puts the glass down it's like, right ok. She's sad as well though, because she's like, "I know I can beat you and I will beat you. In terms of, social media – I know how to do dirty tricks, put horrible messages out." Already Vonny, when the glass happens, she's seeing all that – that's she really really going to make things horrible for her sister. And it saddens her, but she does it, because she feels it's for the greater good of the town.

TAQI: I think from Ally's point of view, there's two or three key moments that bring us into the world of this town. The first one was when you and I were having our first interview – and there's something that's always stuck with me, I wonder if that's because I come from a dual heritage background, being Scottish, my family's from Pakistan, and the idea of this town – I say to you, "but you're like me, we both grew up here". Why that sticks out for me is because, normally what happens is the other way round. You see – forgive me – white Scottish people saying to me "you're like me". It's flipped round now.

GABE: You get the power.

TAQI: We get the power. It's not so much power, it's almost an acceptance. We've got this wee Scottish town which I can't imagine there's much diversity in the town - apart from Ally - saying to someone of Vonny's stature "you're like me" and that's key. I think that shows that the world we're living in now – this whole idea of the Black Lives Matter movement – it's not so much reclaiming power away from yourselves, but actually going, "I know my own power." That's quite a key moment for me, but it's quite a subtle moment. The second moment is when you give me the paper and I've got to make a statement. The statement where I'm going, "Kirsten's stood down."

GABE: Yeah, she's not well.

TAQI: And then it's all very presenter-y, and then I put the paper down and that's the first time we get something of Ally going, "what the f is going on here?" So we've gone from presenter to normal, going, "I'm not understanding what's going on here." But I'm also thinking about how is this all going to pan out, because I'm the one in charge of the audience. They're going to turn on me.

GABE: "How many likes am I going to get?"

TAQI: Exactly. It's the first time we see Ally coming out of presenter mode. I think that's quite key to see – the duality in his personality. And the final moment is at the Big Splash launch where I tell everyone to shut the f up. And then we actually see the turn: Ally has a moral backbone. He's not going to let the town suffer, he's going to try his best, so he gives Kirsten the mic in order to shut you up, really. I think there's three really key moments for Ally on his journey throughout this play, for me.

HANNAH: I play Kirsten
Stockmann.

Kirsten is the protagonist of
the piece

and she makes a discovery
about

THE ENEMY | HANNAH AND ELENA

HANNAH: I play Kirsten Stockmann. Kirsten is the protagonist of the piece and she makes a discovery about a poison in the water supply of the town, which stands to jeopardise first of all the development of the resort which is due to open on the day that our play takes place, and also – first and foremost – severely affects the health of everyone in this town. It's a massive discovery. Kirsten is very headstrong, independent, fiery. She has incredibly strong ethics and beliefs, and her pursuit of the truth – and getting the truth out there to the people of the town is what drives the play forward.

ELENA: I play Petra Stockmann. Petra is Kirsten's daughter. Very similar: headstrong, strong beliefs - obviously passed down from mum. And she's come up with her mum from London – so she's grown up in London even though her mum's Scottish – she's come up when Kirsten's started a new job. She's been put in a new school, a new environment, brand new town. At the beginning of the play we touch on her still trying to fit in, the struggles of being a teenager in a new place at that age. She also becomes a vocal character in Kirsten's decisions. She has a lot to say about what her mum decides throughout the play, and she's very vocal about her opinions of the other characters too.

HANNAH: From the get go the stakes for the character are very high. The first scene, everybody – all their focus – is on getting the resort open. There's a big launch going to happen this evening. We talked a lot in rehearsals about feeling like the pressure's on, but people are really excited. This is a big deal for the town – it's brought lots of new jobs in, we're regenerating a town that has otherwise struggled for a long period of time. It feels like – we talked about wedding day butterflies. So there's the domestic at play, like the first scene is us with a real urgency to get out the house, but all the while Kirsten is aware, she's waiting for these test results to come back. She has a gut feeling that there's something wrong with the water supply to the town. So although she is pressing ahead with the events of the day, in the back of her head she's constantly got this little red flag in the back of her mind. She hasn't received the test results yet. By the end of scene two she gets the test results. So from then on in with each scene that progresses the stakes get higher and she meets more and more obstacles. For me, from an acting point of view, what I found incredibly difficult, the challenge of making Kirsten believable and truthful, is how do you pitch those progressions? Physically, it's quite a hard thing to do. It's quite an exhausting part to play. But also to constantly be aware that each obstacle she encounters is thrown at her from people that she loves and cares about, so there's an emotional dilemma as well as the ethical issue. She struggles with her daughter, in the mother-daughter relationship. She struggles with her sister, her sister is a massive obstacle in order to get the truth out. She struggles with one of her very close friends, Benny Hovstad, who plays the journalist who decides to not publish the article that she and him decided to write. Her father-in-law... so there's this constant sway between the emotional and the ethics of the piece, her pursuit of the truth. So that for me, to find the balance between the two of them.

ELENA: I agree with that. What you're saying about the pace of the play – it's so quick that it kind of reminded me when we were in rehearsals of when they talk about doing Shakespeare and you have to think on-the-line because you don't have time... they say everything they think. It was like that. You don't have time just to sit as a character and play the emotion of it. Everything is coming at a really fast pace – especially for Kirsten. That was a struggle, to keep that pace going, especially because I'm off for quite a large portion of the play, and then come back on when a lot has happened. That was a big challenge to keep that energy up. In terms of Petra, it was useful that Petra talks a lot about others, so it was really easy to see her opinions on everyone. She has very loud opinions on every person that enters the space. And obviously there's been changes to the script, so there were a few lines before that really helped me establish what she thought of everyone. It's been a good process to work out pacing, and attitudes to everyone, and different relationships in the space – and how they change. Similar to Kirsten, people she trusts completely change – particularly her grandad. And those are quite dramatic scenes but that happened really quickly.

HANNAH: The whole play takes place over the course of less than 24 hours. So constantly we're talking about the timeline of the piece. We open and it's 8am, then Petra gets dropped at school so it's probably just before 9, then Kirsten goes to visit Benny at his office to give an interview but by which point she's received this information – these test results from the lab – so maybe it's half 9, 10 o'clock. That was really important for us to mark at what stage of the day, where is the drama taking us.

ELENA: That was helpful to add to the drama. At times we felt like we were being dramatic, but actually if you had that amount of time you'd react in huge ways. Like when we decide to go to the launch, I've just come home from school, and that's a very quick decision I make to go and burst into the launch. Because there's that lack of time, it really heightens the drama of it.

HANNAH: Time has a huge tension over the whole piece because there's such an urgency to get this information out into the public domain now. How do we best do that? How do we get the truth out there? And then of course all the obstacles are thrown in the way.

ELENA: The first scene is important for our characters. We are establishing a lot of information, the audience is being hit with a lot of details: that Petra's moved up here, that Kirsten's got this new job, possibly something about the tap water because you do mention that, and different relationships with Benny, with Vonny, etc. I think the overriding theme for us in the first section is the mother-daughter relationship and the pushes and pulls of the single-parent relationship, and also a young mother, which has a different dynamic than maybe someone who's had a child at an older age and has had lots of family around them. They've been together alone for a long time. The first scene establishes that to the audience: that they're a team. Even though they're at it the whole time, fighting, you see that they're very close. They talk about a lot, Petra swears a lot in front of her mum, quite comfortably.

HANNAH: We spoke about them at points appearing more like sisters than mother and daughter. The age difference between them isn't all that big, there's only about 17 years. It does change the dynamic between them. Because they have been on their own for so long it has been them against the world for the most part of Petra's childhood. And this is the first time they've come back to Kirsten's home town – Petra's probably never been there, perhaps visited – we don't hear a lot about my parents, Petra's grandparents. The only connections here are Vonny, my sister – your auntie – and Derek Kilmartin, my father-in-law, grandad, who I don't really want her to have a relationship with. So there's a real push-and-pull between the two of them. You, I think, would like a relationship with Derek?

ELENA: I think, for Petra, it's the only male influence in her life and the only other parenting figure. I don't think he's been a massive part of her life but I think she clings onto him because she thinks that can allow her to access a part of her life that she's had taken away from her, because her dad has passed away. And I think that Petra really enjoys that Kirsten doesn't want her to see Derek. It's that young thing of anything that your mum doesn't want you to do you automatically do want to do. That's set up going into the second scene, too, that hatred from Kirsten and the secret texts between her and her grandad anyway, which is an interesting dynamic, and one that I think is in a lot of families.

HANNAH: And that relationship between you and your grandfather, we establish very early on that Kirsten strongly feels that she does not want her daughter to have a relationship with this man. But it's very difficult for her to stop that because she's 16, she's a young woman, ultimately they live in a small town and she is going to spend time with him – she is spending time with him. And there's not a huge amount I can do about that, and I don't want to push her away, so I have to let it play out. Nevertheless, I do always make it clear to Petra that I'm not happy about it. Through the course of the play, Kirsten's loyalties and relationships that she has with the people closest to her – namely

Vonny and Benny who are her closest allies who completely turn their backs on her when it really matters – and then we see Derek in the final moments of the play, in the last scene, where he has used the savings – so he's put money in an account for Petra, an inheritance, which I have known about but I've never told Petra about – and then as the resort falls into ruin because of the discovery of the contamination of the water, and the outburst that Kirsten has to the public at the launch night will make the public question whether or not, "do we listen to this woman? Do we believe her?" And then Derek Kilmartin comes to the house and tells us both that he's used this money to buy most of the shares in the resort and he is now the majority shareholder. And as he says, "I am now the boss." And leaves Kirsten with a huge dilemma whereby he presents her with a contract and asks her to retract what she said about the contamination of the water, and that this contamination has been caused by Derek Kilmartin's business. So he says, "you can have your job back, I can give the two of you a life" – that at this point in time in the play they had no chance of, no money, no prospect of any work in the town – so does she sign this contract? Or does she stand for everything that she believes in, and everything she's told her daughter to believe in? Does she give in to him, and sign the contract? Which makes you aware of all the things that I have said about Kilmartin up to this point come true, we finally see him in his true light.

ELENA: At that point there's an attempt from Derek, as well, to turn me on my mum. But because that's been building in the play, and I realise that you're right, I think she must be in complete shock that this person has turned on her, but it leaves them – I think it's interesting when plays do that, when they come full circle – because we're alone again, like we were at the beginning. It's us against the world again. But now with even bigger problems than before. That's really good for the acting and working out the relationship because it feels like there's a real team at the end.

HANNAH: What happens is that everything that Kirsten has – all the characteristics that you will have inherited from your mum, I've passed the baton onto you – ultimately it's Petra at the end going, "you can't do this mum, you're right, you told me you're right." You've got that beautiful speech at the end where she stands up for, it's almost like Kirsten twenty years ago.

ELENA: It's that young, it's not naivety, because as a teenager you're very switched-on and clever. I think it's more of a belief that you could do anything. I think Petra really believes that just them two alone is fine. I don't think it's that she's not aware of the money struggles, but I think she thinks that the truth is more important than anything, because she has inherited that from mum. So Kirsten can't really complain, because she has passed it all down.

HANNAH: I'm so aware of how heartbreaking that is for Kirsten. Yes I have encouraged you to believe that you can make a change, but I'm not sure in that final moment if Kirsten believes that when she looks into her daughter's eyes and goes, "life is going to be really hard from here on in if we rip this contract up." She says, "it's really difficult being so alone". That's one of the last things that she says to her.

ELENA: And Petra says, "we'll be alright, we've got each other." It's those two beliefs.

HANNAH: It's simple and true in lots of ways, but I think also ultimately heartbreaking.

ELENA: You can make your own mind up. Honestly, the ending lets you make your own mind up about whether she would sign it or not.

HANNAH: Does she rip the contract up or not?