

STAYING IN LANES

A one act play by Phil Lewis

SHORTENED **SAMPLE** VERSION

For full version please contact:
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Approx: 45:00 mins with scene changes and entrances/exits.

Cast:

DJ:	20+(voice on radio)
CAL:	30+
RICHARD:	30+
REBECCA:	30+
DONNA:	20+
TAYLOR:	30+

(THE ACTION OF THIS PLAY TAKES PLACE IN A TRAFFIC JAM CAUSED BY ROAD WORKS, ON THE M25. THE PLAY STARTS MID AFTERNOON ON FRIDAY AND ENDS IN THE EARLY HOURS OF SATURDAY MORNING.

THE SET IS OPEN.

THERE ARE THREE STATIONERY CARS, EACH DEPICTED BY TWO SEATS IN THE FRONT ROW AND THREE BEHIND.

THE SEATS ALL FACE THE AUDIENCE. EACH CAR IS SEPARATED BY A FEW FEET, WHILE ON THE FLOOR ARE STRIPS OF WHITE DOTTED LINES INDICATING THE TRAFFIC LANES.

THESE LINES CAN EXAGGERATE PERSPECTIVE TO AID THE PERCEPTION OF DISTANCE.

THE CARS ARE DESIGNATED STAGE LEFT, CENTRE AND RIGHT)

STAYING IN LANES

SCENE 1

(AS THE PLAY OPENS THE TOM ROBINSON TRACK 'MOTORWAY SIGNS' IS PLAYING IN THE BLACKOUT. THE MUSIC TURNS INTO A RADIO DJ ANNOUNCEMENT)

(RECORDED VOICE OF DJ, SINGING ALONG WITH THE FADING OUT TRACK)

DJtwo, four, six, eight, never too late.....Tom Robinson there, with Motorway Signs. Speaking of which, (personal jingle) we have a traffic report just come in.

(THE LIGHTS COME UP ON THE STAGE.

IN THE CENTER CAR SITS RICHARD, ALONE.

IN THE RIGHT CAR IS DAVID, SITTING IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT LOOKING FORWARD, LOOKING AT HIS WATCH, AND TAYLOR SITTING QUIETLY BESIDE HIM.

THE CAR STAGE LEFT CONTAINS DONNA IN THE DRIVING SEAT, APPARENTLY SINGING, ALTHOUGH WE CANNOT HEAR HER YET.

NEXT TO HER IS CAL, HALF ASLEEP AND BEHIND THEM REBECCA READING IN THE CENTRAL, REAR SEAT)

DJ There is a ten mile traffic hold up on the clockwise side of the M25. Between junctions 18 and 20, due to a combination of road works and bridge repairs. So avoid that if you can. For those of you sitting there listening to Radio Rock.....this one's for you.....

(THE KINK'S 'SO TIRED, TIRED OF WAITING' BEGINS TO PLAY.

AFTER A FEW BARS RICHARD MIMES SWITCHING OFF THE RADIO AND THE MUSIC ABRUPTLY STOPS. HE GETS OUT OF HIS CAR AND WALKS TO THE FRONT OF THE CAR, LOOKING INTO THE DISTANCE. HE IS ANXIOUS.

REBECCA SEES RICHARD GETTING OUT OF THE CAR AND SHE LEANS FORWARD TO WATCH HIM. DONNA IS SINGING ALONG TO HER RADIO, UNAWARE OF HER SURROUNDINGS. RICHARD LOOKS BACK IN ANGUISH AND SHRUGS HIS SHOULDERS AT THE LINE OF CARS. TAYLOR SMILES WEAKLY BACK AT HIM. REBECCA MAKES A SMALL HAND GESTURE OF HELLO. RICHARD MOVES TO WAIT BY HIS CAR AND LEANS ON THE BONNET.

A CURRENT POP TUNE SWELLS UP AS DONNA MIMES RE-TUNING THE RADIO STATION)

CAL: I was listening to that.

DONNA: I wasn't. Where's Capital?

REB: (QUIETLY, WHILE INTENTLY WATCHING RICHARD) Ninety-five point six. On FM, Donna! FM!

DONNA: Oh, yeah.

(ANOTHER POP TUNE CAN NOW BE HEARD)

REB: I wonder what he's anxious about?

CAL: (LOOKING UP) Who?

(REBECCA DOES NOT ANSWER BUT SITS BACK IN THE SEAT, STILL WATCHING.)

CAL FOCUSES ON RICHARD AND THEN LOOKS BACK AT REBECCA IN PUZZLEMENT. SHE SHAKES HER HEAD AND PICKS UP A MAGAZINE AND BEGINS TO READ.

DONNA STARTS TO SING ALONG WITH THE MUSIC.

CAL REACHES FORWARD AND REDUCES THE VOLUME. THE RECORD PLAYS GENTLY IN THE BACKGROUND AS THE LIGHTS LOWER ON LEFT CAR)

SCENE 2

(THE LIGHTS BRIGHTEN ON THE RIGHT CAR, AS TAYLOR PICKS UP HER MOBILE AND MOVES OUT OF THE CAR. SHE MOVES AWAY FROM THE LINE OF CARS AND TRIES TO CASUALLY MAKE A PRIVATE CALL)

TAY: Mike. Hi. In the car. No. Stuck in a bloody traffic jam. No, really. Where do you think I'd.....? Look, I'll call you back.

(TAYLOR PRESSES THE END BUTTON AND ANGRILY TAPS THE PHONE AGAINST HER TEETH IN QUIET THOUGHT.)

DAVID WATCHES HER FROM THE CAR.

IN CAR LEFT, REBECCA HAS LEANT FORWARD SO SHE CAN SEE TAYLOR.

IN A SUDDEN BURST OF DESPERATION, DONNA GETS OUT OF THE CAR AND LOOKS AROUND FOR SOMEWHERE TO USE AS A TOILET.

REBECCA CASUALLY HANDS HER A HANDFUL OF TISSUES AND POINTS OFF LEFT. DONNA GRABS THE TISSUES AND RUSHES OFF WITHOUT A GLANCE.

TAYLOR AND RICHARD WATCH HER RUN OFF.

REBECCA SLOWLY GETS OUT OF THE CAR AND MOVES TO WHERE SHE CAN SEE ALL THE ACTION, WITHOUT BEING TOO OBVIOUS. SHE STANDS QUIETLY WATCHING THE INTERPLAY OF THE CHARACTERS.

BOTH RICHARD AND TAYLOR ARE, AT FIRST, HESITANT TO START A CONVERSATION)

RICH: I just don't believe this! (POINTS AHEAD TO THE TRAFFIC JAM)

TAY: It happens all the time these days. We're late for a meeting. Today of all days! Motorways are supposed to speed up your journey, not slow it down. It's all our fault, I suppose.

RICH: How do you mean?

TAY: We come to rely on getting from A to B in a fast and predictable time. Where in fact, it only needs a few traffic cones to totally screw up your journey from London to Birmingham.

RICH: You're right. My wife's due any minute and I'm stuck here! Christ almighty.....!

TAY: (AFTER AN EMBARRASSING PAUSE) Your first?

RICH: Yes....I so desperately wanted to.....be there. Now this. What is the problem?

TAY: The radio said something about a collapsed bridge structure. We'll be here for hours, I reckon. Try to relax as best as you can. You can't do anything, so relax.

RICH: Easy for you to say.

(SHE SMILES AND WALKS OVER TO HIM AND HANDS HIM HER MOBILE PHONE TO GIVE THE HOSPITAL A RING.

SHE WALKS BACK TO HER CAR. RICHARD SMILES IN GRATITUDE AND QUICKLY DIALS A NUMBER. HE PACES AROUND THE CAR WHILE HE TALKS TO THE HOSPITAL. THE LIGHTS GO DOWN ON CAR CENTER)

SCENE 3

(TAYLOR LEANS IN TO TALK TO DAVID)

DAVID: What was that all about?

TAY: His wife's having a baby and he wanted to be there. Poor sod.

DAVID: Never mind him. (*Looks at his watch*) If we miss this meeting we're well and truly stuffed, I can tell you.

TAY: Then you better get brace yourself. We're not going to make it in time, David. No way.

DAVID: Get Carlos on the phone. Let's see what we can do from here, then.

TAY: (SHE LOOKS ACROSS TO RICHARD WHO IS STILL TALKING) Sure. Why waste time, eh?

(WITH A FIXED STARE AT DAVID SHE WALKS SLOWLY TOWARDS RICHARD WITH A SMILE. AS HE SEES HER APPROACH, HE REALISES HIS TIME IS UP AND SIGNS OFF. HE HANDS THE PHONE BACK TO HER)

RICH: Thanks. Thanks very much. Very kind of you.

TAY: Useful things aren't they? (SHE CARESSES HER PHONE) They can keep you in touch, or keep you apart. How is she? Your wife?

RICH: She's started. They're still saying any minute, but they've been saying that for ages.

TAY: It'll be all right. Don't worry. We need this right now, but give them a call again later. You can give them this number so they can let you know. All right?

RICH: Thanks. Yes. Thanks, I will.

(TAYLOR SMILES AND DIALS A NUMBER AS SHE WALKS BACK TO THE CAR. SHE SPEAKS SILENTLY FOR A FEW MOMENTS THEN HANDS THE PHONE TO DAVID WHO MIMES HIS CONVERSATION.

TAYLOR WATCHES THE PACING RICHARD WITH A WISTFUL LOOK ON HER FACE.

THE LIGHTS REDUCE ON RIGHT CAR AS DONNA WANDERS BACK FROM THE SIDE OF THE ROAD, LOOKING RELIEVED. SHE GETS BACK INTO HER CAR.

FADE BRIEFLY TO BLACKOUT)

SCENE 4

(THE LIGHTS INCREASE ON LEFT CAR. DONNA AND CAL ARE SOON DRINKING FROM CANS AND BOTH ARE SINGING ALONG TO THE MUSIC.

CAL LOOKS AROUND FOR REBECCA AND GIVES UP TRYING TO SEE HER.

DONNA TURNS UP THE RADIO AND WE HEAR A TOP TEN SONG AND THEIR ATTEMPTS TO SING IN TUNE.

REBECCA MOVES FORWARD TO TALK TO RICHARD AND THE RADIO SOUND REDUCES.

THE GIRLS MIME THEIR SINGING)

REB: Hi.

RICH: (STILL HESITANT TO MAKE CONVERSATION) Hello. What a waste of time, eh?

REB: Yes. (LOOKING AT HER WATCH) Nearly two hours now. It'll be ages yet. In a hurry?

RICH: Yes. My wife's due to have our baby. I really should be there.

(HE PEERS INTO THE DISTANCE HOPING FOR TRAFFIC MOVEMENT)

REB: It must go on for miles.

RICH: Ten. They said ten miles on the radio and something about a bridge collapsing. That was a while ago, probably twenty miles now. Oh dear.

REB: Can't be helped. Do you have anything to drink, or eat in your car?

RICH: No. I'm sorry.

REB: It's okay. We have plenty. We've been on a picnic. Well, any outing with Donna turns out to be a picnic. I'll get you something.

RICH: Very kind of you.

REB: Rebecca.

RICH: Richard Marins.

REB: Would you like to see if they have anything to share too? (SHE MOTIONS TOWARDS RIGHT CAR)

RICH: Sure. Good idea.

(REBECCA MOVES BACK TO HER CAR AND THE MUSIC VOLUME INCREASES. SHE SITS IN THE BACK SEAT. THERE SHE SORTS OUT SOME FOOD WHILE THE OTHER TWO GIRLS CONTINUE TO SING THEIR SONG.

RICHARD TENTATIVELY MOVES OVER TO TAYLOR AND CONVERSES SILENTLY. WE LISTEN TO THE GIRLS FINISH THEIR SONG)

DONNA: What're you doing?

REB: Looking for something to eat and drink.

DONNA: There's plenty there.

REB: Not for me. To share.

CAL: Share with whom?

REB: The other stranded waifs, Cal.

CAL: Like.....a party, you mean?

REB: (*Easing out of the car*) If you like.

CAL: The last thing I feel like right now, is a party! (*She blows her nose into a tissue*)

(FADE BRIEFLY TO BLACKOUT)

SCENE 5

(LIGHTS DIM ON CAR LEFT AND RISE ON CAR RIGHT.

DAVID HAS LEFT THE CAR IN EXASPERATION AND WANDERS AROUND HIS CAR TALKING ON THE MOBILE PHONE. SLOWLY HE IS GETTING ANGRY AND FRUSTRATED.

RICHARD SITS IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT OF CAR RIGHT AND TALKS TO TAYLOR.

TAYLOR KEEPS A WATCHFUL EYE ON DAVID AS THEY TALK)

RICH: Your boss? (SHE NODS) Get on okay?

(TAYLOR GIVES HIM A HARD STARE AND GETS OUT OF THE CAR.

RICHARD IS PUZZLED BY HER ACTION AND BECOMES EMBARRASSED. HE GETS OUT OF THE CAR AND WATCHES AS TAYLOR MOVES TO DAVID AND STARTS QUIETLY TALKING TO HIM.

REBECCA MOVES OVER TO HIM WITH HER ARMS LOADED WITH CANS OF SOFT DRINKS AND LIGHT SNACKS)

REB: Courtesy of Donna. Any joy there?

RICH: (SHAKING HIS HEAD IN PUZZLEMENT) I think I managed to upset her and I don't know what I did!

REB: What did you say to her?

RICH: All I said was....is that your boss?...do you get on with him?

REB: Perhaps a little too personal? Wrong conversational move. We're, all here against our will, but being a communicative species we try to have some kind of rapport with each other.

RICH: I was only making conversation.....

REB: We'll all split up when the traffic moves and never see each other again. In the meantime, we can't just let silence hang in the air, can we? We must make some attempt at conversation. That's just human, isn't it?

RICH: I suppose so.

REB: I know so. It may be that she's not in the mood for a chat! She looks a little stressed. Have a drink. She's coming back now.

(TAYLOR WALKS TO RICHARD AND SMILES AT REBECCA)

TAY: Try the hospital again. The mobile number's on the case there. Get them to call you when anything happens. David needs the phone in few minutes. Make the most of it now.

RICH: Thanks.

(RICHARD MOVES AWAY TO HIS CAR TO MAKE THE CALL)

REB: Hello. I'm Rebecca. Would you like a drink.

TAY: Thanks. I'd love one. I'm parched. We were supposed to stop for lunch, but.....thanks.

REB: And your name?

TAY: Oh, Taylor.

REB: Mrs. Taylor?

TAY: Just, 'Taylor'. That's what everyone knows me as.

REB: How unusual! That's Richard (*pointing*) and the two bimbos in the car are Donna and Cal. We're just coming back from shopping. Window shopping in my case. Food shopping in Donna's case. Pleased to meet you.

TAY: Same here, Rebecca.

REB: Does.....David?.....want a drink?

TAY: I suspect so.

REB: I'll take one to him. You try to keep our 'dad to be' calm here.

(WITH A GRIN REBECCA MOVES TO DAVID AND OFFERS HIM A CAN AND BAG OF CRISPS. WITH A SMILE DAVID ACCEPTS THE CAN AND WAVES OFF THE CRISPS.)

TAYLOR PATIENTLY WAITS FOR HER PHONE TO BE RETURNED)

REB: I'm Rebecca. Pleased to meet you.

DAVID: Nice to meet you too. Thanks very much for the kind thought. I just wish it was under more pleasant circumstances.

REB: If we weren't trapped, we'd never have got the chance to get to know each other, would we?

DAVID: No. I suppose that's true. Cheers (DRINKS FROM THE CAN)

REB: Cheers. Nice girl, Taylor.

DAVID: Yes. Very.

REB: Secretary?

DAVID: PA. She's excellent. She's my right arm.

REB: Right. (DRINKS) Pretty too.

DAVID: Yes. I suppose she is.

REB: Pretty name.

DAVID: Yes. Thanks for the drink. (LOOKS AT HIS WATCH)

REB: That's a nice watch. Very flash.

DAVID: Yes. My wife gave it to me for our anniversary.

REB: Expensive?

DAVID: I suppose it was. I'd better get my phone back. I have a crisis I must attend to.

REB: (AS HE IS MOVING AWAY) Where would we be without a watch and phone these days, eh?

(HE SMILES UNCERTAINLY AT HER AS HE MOVES AWAY TOWARDS RICHARD'S CAR AND THE LIGHTS GO DOWN ON THEM)

SCENE 6

(REBECCA MOVES BACK TO HER CAR, WAVING AT RICHARD, SITTING IN HIS DRIVER'S SEAT. HE WAVES BACK, HALF-HEARTEDLY.)

LIGHTS UP ON CAR LEFT AS REBECCA JOINS HER FRIENDS IN THE CAR)

DONNA: Been nosing again, Becky?

REB: Not really. What else can we do sitting here? We'll be here for hours yet.

DONNA: Have a crisp.

REB: No, thanks.

(REBECCA SETTLES BACK IN THE SEAT AND STARES OUT AT THE OTHER TWO CARS)

I just need something to occupy my mind.

DONNA: Let's have some music then.

(TURNING ON THE RADIO. ANOTHER POP TUNE CAN BE HEARD)

CAL: Pass those tissues, Becky. Ta. (SHE BLOWS HER NOSE HARD)

DONNA: Still feel rough, Cal?

CAL: (NODDING) I feel like crap.

DONNA: We'll get you home and tucked up in bed. As soon as we can get moving. What is happening up there?

(DONNA STARES THROUGH THE WINDSCREEN)

REB: We may never know. What's more interesting, is what's happening right here.

(REBECCA STARES OUT OF THE WINDOW AS THE LIGHTS GO TO ALMOST BLACKOUT)

SCENE 7

(THERE FOLLOWS A SEQUENCE OF THREE BLACKOUTS, DURING WHICH THE PLAYERS INTERCHANGE THEIR POSITIONS WITHIN THEIR OWN CARS AND MIX AND MATCH WITHIN OTHER CARS.)

THE JUXTAPOSITION OF THE CHARACTERS INDICATES THAT TIME IS PASSING.

THEY PRESENT VARIOUS POSES AS THE LIGHTS COME UP. SLEEPING, READING MAGAZINES (WHICH ARE PASSED FROM CAR TO CAR.

DAVID READS '16', DONNA READS 'BUSINESS NEWS'), STRETCHED OUT ACROSS THE SEATS, WALKING AROUND THE CARS, TALKING QUIETLY TO EACH OTHER, MOVING TO THE SIDE OF THE ROAD TO RELIEVE THEMSELVES, RETURNING FROM USING THE BUSHES, ETC)

SCENE 8

(THE LIGHTS FINALLY COME UP ON CAR RIGHT, WITH DAVID IN THE PASSENGER SEAT, TALKING ON THE MOBILE.

IT IS NOW DUSK AND THE STREET LIGHTS HAVE A SLIGHT ORANGE GLOW.

TAYLOR IS LEANING INTO CAR LEFT, TALKING QUIETLY TO REBECCA AND DONNA.

CAL IS SITTING IN THE PASSENGER SEAT OF CAR CENTRE, NEXT TO RICHARD)

DAVID: Hello, darling. Yes, fine. No, we haven't got there yet. Road works on the M25. We've been stuck for hours already (LOOKS AT HIS WATCH) I'm hoping the meeting will be delayed. Yes, I know we were, but what can I do.....? Yes, I will. Call you later. Bye.

(ALMOST IMMEDIATELY THE PHONE RINGS.

RICHARD CAN HEAR IT FROM HIS CAR AND SITS UP, HOPING IT'S THE HOSPITAL.

TAYLOR HEARS IT AND BEGINS TO WALK CALMLY BACK TOWARDS DAVID'S CAR)

DAVID: Carlos.....Carlos, slow down a minute. Look.....all I need to do is talk to Dominic. Just do that for me. Get his mobile number.....What! Why won't he give it to you? I don't care if he doesn't want to discuss business outside of the meeting..... All right, we'll have to live with that. Keep in touch with me here. Any calls he makes, let me know immediately. Give Dominic my mobile number and ask him to call me. Carlos....Carlos, just do it. Tell him I'm anxious to talk to him and ask him to call me for an informal chat only. Just do that for me, okay? Thanks. Bye.

TAY: Carlos beginning to panic?

DAVID: A little. Dominic is getting jittery and Carlos is picking up on it. If I could just talk to Dominic.....

TAY: Perhaps it's better to wait. Let everyone get around the table. We'll all feel calmer by then.

DAVID: It's just that it's so vital.....

TAY: All the more reason to try and stay relaxed.

(SHE MOVES AND TRIES TO HOLD HIS HAND FOR COMFORT. HE APPEARS NOT TO NOTICE AND SHE SLOWLY WITHDRAWS)

Let's just wait for the call. Would you like something to eat or drink? We've got some kind donations from our fellow travellers there. (HE SHAKES HIS HEAD AND LOOKS AT HIS WATCH) Okay. Why don't you stretch your legs? You've been sitting too long, David. Get the circulation going. Come on, out.

(TAYLOR FORCES HIM OUT OF THE CAR AND WANDERS AROUND WITH HIM AS THE LIGHTS DIM ON CAR RIGHT)

SCENE 9

(THE LIGHTS COME UP ON CAR CENTRE)

CAL: So, what would you like the baby to be? Boy or girl?

RICH: I'd like a boy. Sally'd like a girl. In the end it doesn't really matter, as long as it's healthy. Corny, eh?

CAL: Not really. A healthy baby is supposed to be worth everything. We can all cope with disappointment about the sex of the child. My parents wanted a boy. They were very disappointed when I turned out to be a girl.

RICH: Are you married? Kids or anything?

CAL: (SHE LOOKS WISTFULLY AT HIM AND SLOWLY SMILES) Not any more. I do want children. I'd like a girl. A girl that would grow up just like me. Only better. Except.....she would then probably make the same mistakes as me.....I'd show her how to avoid life's pitfalls.

RICH: You can never fully control, or dictate, a child's life, surely?

CAL: My parents tried. That's another story. You look like you're an okay guy. Judging by your clothes, the car and everything. The kid has a good start, wouldn't you say?

RICH: I hope so.

CAL: If it's a boy, you'd try to bring him up to be just like yourself, then?

RICH: He'll be allowed to be himself. If he wants me as a role model, fine. If not.....It'll be his choice not mine.

CAL: Good. Glad to hear it.

RICH: I feel we'll grow as a family, not try to overly influence each other. At least, that's the current game plan.

CAL: Good luck.

RICH: Thanks. Good luck to you too.

CAL: For what?

RICH: For some improvement in your situation. You seem very sad and disillusioned about life. I hope things improve for you.

CAL: Thanks. So do I. You're very sweet.

(THE LIGHTS DIM ON CAR CENTRE TO ALMOST BLACKOUT)

SCENE 10

(WHEN THE LIGHTS COME ON AGAIN THE CHARACTERS HAVE CHANGED ROUND TO DENOTE TIME PASSING.

IT IS NOW NIGHT TIME. EACH CAR IS SPOT LIT, AS IF LIT FROM INTERNAL LIGHTS.

DAVID IS STANDING BY HIS CAR WITH TAYLOR.

RICHARD IS ASLEEP IN HIS CAR AND THE TWO GIRLS ARE HALF ASLEEP IN CAR LEFT, WITH REBECCA STANDING TO THE REAR, WATCHING.

THE MOBILE PHONE RINGS.

RICHARD IS INSTANTLY AWAKE AND DAVID GRABS THE PHONE FROM INSIDE THE CAR)

DAVID: Carlos, yes. They're what! Where?

(DAVID GETS OUT OF THE CAR AND TRIES TO LOOK FOR ROAD SIGNS, OR LANDMARKS.

DURING THE CONVERSATION HE REACHES BACK INTO THE CAR AND PULLS OUT A ROAD MAP. HE WAVES TAYLOR OVER AND MOUTHS TO HER 'WHERE ARE WE?')

DAVID: Where are they? About 15 miles from Junction 19! That must be near where we are! Do you know where exactly. Buildings, large trees....I don't know....something that's a landmark for me. Why? Because I want to find them, that's why. (LOOKING AT TAYLOR WHO IS POINTING TO THE MAP) No, Carlos. If I could just have a few words with him.

(TAYLOR IS SLOWLY SHAKING HER HEAD AND REACHES OUT FOR THE PHONE. DAVID TURNS AWAY AND CARRIES ON TALKING TO CARLOS)

There's nothing wrong in that. How could there.....?

(TAYLOR INDICATES THAT SHE WANTS TO SPEAK WITH CARLOS. DAVID CONSIDERS FOR A MOMENT THEN RELUCTANTLY HANDS OVER THE MOBILE)

Taylor for you, Carlos. Speak with you in a minute. Just find out.....

(TAYLOR TAKES THE PHONE)

TAY: Carlos. What exactly did Dominic say? Well, whomever you spoke to then?

(SHE LOOKS AT THE MAP AND MOVES WAY FROM THE CAR TOWARDS RICHARD SITTING FIDGETING IN HIS CAR)

Hold on a mo. Richard? Any idea exactly where we are now?

(RICHARD TAKES THE MAP AND LOOKS BRIEFLY AT IT. IN ONE POSITIVE MOVEMENT HE POINTS TO A SPOT. HE SMILES AT HER)

RICH: Right there. I work a few miles from here. I know exactly where we are.

TAY: Thanks. Carlos? (SHE MOVES BACK TO DAVID) As best as I can guess I reckon we're within a mile or two of our guests. It really depends whether we are in front or behind them.

DAVID: So we're both caught in a jam!

TAY: Hang on, Carlos. (TO DAVID) When the traffic moves we would need to get there before them. We can't be seen to be late, can we? If they get there before us.....!

DAVID: So what?

TAY: Well.....we want them to believe that THEY are the cause of any delay. They'll feel extra pressure to get things moving quickly at the meeting. They will be the ones under pressure. We can allow them to think that we've been kept waiting for hours. It's a small edge. But we need all the help we can get on this, David. (HE NODS AND SETTLES BACK INTO HIS SEAT, STILL LOOKING AT HIS WATCH) Carlos? Call me back if anything else happens. Thanks, bye.

(THE LIGHTS GO DOWN ON CAR RIGHT, TO ALMOST A BLACKOUT)

SCENE 11

(DURING THE BLACKOUT, THE CHARACTERS CHANGE POSITION AGAIN.

DAVID IS QUIETLY TALKING TO RICHARD IN CAR CENTRE.

BOTH DONNA AND CAL ARE FAST ASLEEP IN THEIR CAR.

REBECCA STANDS TO ONE SIDE OF CAR RIGHT WATCHING TAYLOR.

TAYLOR STANDS AWAY FROM THE CARS AND TALKS QUIETLY INTO HER PHONE)

TAY: Mike....me. We're still stuck in the jam.....David, who else? Turn on the radio, Mike! Listen for yourself. Look....I'm going to be late.....again, I know. But late, late. We're already five hours behind schedule.....it's got nothing to do with that....honest. Mike! Listen.....I am really sorry. I know I promised, but this bloody traffic.....Mike? Mike?

(TAYLOR STANDS IN THOUGHTFUL POSE AS REBECCA SLOWLY WALKS ACROSS, HOLDING OUT A CANNED DRINK FOR HER)

TAY: Thanks.

REB: The boyfriend? Or husband?

TAY: Live-in.

REB: Known him long?

TAY: Yes.

REB: Does he have a name? (DRINKING FROM HER OWN CAN)

TAY: His name is Mike. We've lived together for nearly ten months now.

REB: Do you love him?

TAY: Direct aren't you?

REB: So I've been told.

TAY: I can imagine.

REB: I've also been told that I am nosy, a people watcher and a voyeur. Whereas all of those are true....I am also genuinely interested in people and like to help where I can.

TAY: Really.

REB: Yes, really. Tell me about your boss, David?

TAY: David now is it?

REB: He seems nice. A little tense.....

TAY: A big day for him. This was an important meeting. Very important. He's not normally like this.

REB: Like what?

TAY: Well.... rude and abrupt. We're both under....

REB:a lot of stress. Yes?

TAY: Yes!

REB: And you have to deal with his problems, too?

TAY: Sort of.

REB: So, apart from your own life, you have to organise his life? (MOTIONS TOWARDS DAVID'S CAR)

TAY: Goes with the job. What do you do for a living?

REB: I'm an agony aunt for a local paper.

TAY: That explains a lot.

REB: Not really. I'm just a small cog in a large machine. Same as a million others. So do you love him?

TAY: Well.....I really don't know. We're having problems right now.

REB: I can see (LOOKING AT THE CAR AGAIN)

TAY: I'm talking about Mike!

REB: Sorry. Yes. Mike. Serious problems?

TAY: I must get back and sort a few things out. (MOVES TO LEAVE) Nice to chat with you.

REB: I really only wanted to help. Is there anyone in your life you can really talk to about your problems? (TAYLOR REMAINS SILENT) Listen. I'm a total stranger. We'll never meet again. I'm the perfect sounding board for you. Talk to me.

You've got nothing to lose. (AFTER A PAUSE) Have you? (PAUSE) We've plenty of time to waste.

TAY: (STARTING OFF RELUCTANTLY) Mike is the jealous type. I spend more time with (POINTS TO CAR) than Mike. I can spend nearly 24 hours a day with David. That's just the way it goes sometimes. You can get very close to someone in that situation. Very close. Oh, I don't necessarily mean in a sexual way....just.....close...you know. It's hard for Mike to fully understand my commitment. And, I'm having trouble putting up with his tantrums. The constant questioning and suspicions. (SHE IS GETTING NEAR TO BEING TEARFUL) When we're alone we're....great. You know. It's just that.....(SHE WIPES HER EYES AND CHANGES THE SUBJECT) Are you married, engaged, whatever....?

REB: In between. Mike is never going to change, you know. For the rest of your time together, he'll always be suspicious of anyone, and I mean anyone, that you see on a regular basis. I had a boyfriend just like him once. It never changes. It got so intense and depressing, that the few good times got exaggerated and somehow, more exciting. Some people get off on this emotional rollercoaster ride. I didn't. So, we parted. That's going to happen to you and I think you already know that. Your problem, if I may say so, is that your alternatives are equally iffy. Right?

TAY: (SMILING) You should get a job on the local paper. I really must get back.

(SHE MOVES AWAY)

REB: You can easily walk away from me, Taylor. But you'll still have to make decisions sooner or later.

TAY: (TURNING BACK TO FACE REBECCA) Yes. You may right. But they're MY problems, Rebecca and I'll make MY own decisions, thank you.

REB: (SHRUGGING) Just trying to help. Honest.

TAY: (SOFTENING) Okay. I must go.

REB: (CALLING AFTER HER) It's your life. It'll be a long time to live with a mistake. Be careful, Taylor.

TAY: (TURNING FOR A MOMENT) Be careful you fully understand what you're talking about, Rebecca. It may be just a game to you, but it's real life to others.

(SHE WALKS TOWARDS CAR LEFT AS LIGHTS GO TO ALMOST BLACKOUT)

SCENE 12

(THE CHARACTERS POSITION CHANGES AGAIN AS TIME CONTINUES TO PASS.

LOW LIGHTS COME UP ON ALL THE CARS. DAVID IS ASLEEP IN THE FRONT OF HIS CAR AND TAYLOR ASLEEP IN THE BACK.

RICHARD IS SITTING ON THE BONNET OF HIS CAR.

THE THREE GIRLS ARE ASLEEP IN THEIR CAR.

THE MOBILE PHONE RINGS. RICHARD MOVES TO CAR RIGHT AS THE LIGHTS COME UP ON IT.

TAYLOR REACHES THE PHONE FIRST, STEPPING OUT OF THE CAR TO TAKE THE CALL)

TAY: Taylor. Carlos?

(RICHARD IS DISAPPOINTED. TAYLOR LOOKS AT HER WATCH AND SO DOES DAVID)

It's ten o'clock. Where are you? Still in the office! What is it? They have? And? (SHE LOOKS RELIEVED) They've postponed the meeting! (SHE LOOKS EXCITEDLY AT DAVID WHO HANGS HIS HEAD IN RELIEF) They were very apologetic. Good. We can reschedule for Monday? Terrific. Thank you, Carlos. Thanks. Go home and get some sleep. Goodnight.

DAVID: We're off the hook for a few days?

TAY: (PUNCHING THE AIR) Yesss! Two whole days to prepare a revised proposal. You lucky bastard, David.

(DAVID GETS OUT OF THE CAR AND MOVES TO HER. THEY HUG FOR A LONG MOMENT.

REBECCA IS NOW WATCHING FROM THE BACK OF CAR RIGHT AND THE TWO GIRLS ARE SLOWLY COMING AWAKE)

DAVID: Taylor, I'm sorry if I've been a little.....you know....uptight. I really only wanted us to.....

(SHE PRESSES A FINGER TO HIS LIPS AND DISENTANGLES HERSELF, AWARE THEY ARE BEING WATCHED)

TAY: You deserve a lucky break. (SHE LOOKS DOWN THE ROAD) No sign of movement. Still, no hurry now is there?

(SHE SUDDENLY REMEMBERS SOMETHING AND MOVES AWAY TO MAKE A CALL)

TAY: Mike, it's Taylor. Pick up the phone if you're there.....All right, call me back when you return. I'm still on my mobile. Still stuck on the M25. I have something very important I want to tell you. Bye.

(SLOWLY SHE PRESSES THE END BUTTON.

DAVID HAS BEEN LOOKING AROUND AT HIS FELLOW STRANDED TRAVELERS, SMILING. HE SEEMS TO MAKE A DECISION AND QUICKLY MOVES OFF DOWN THE LINE OF CARS.

WHEN TAYLOR TURNS FROM HER CALL TO THE CAR, HE HAS GONE)

TAY: Where's David?

RICH: He went that way. In a hurry.

(TAYLOR LOOKS BUT CANNOT SEE HIM)

TAY: Now what!

RICH: May I try the hospital again? They may have forgotten.....

TAY: Sure.

(RICHARD TAKES THE PHONE AND MOVES TO HIS CAR.

TAYLOR GOES AND SITS IN HERS.

THE LIGHTS GO TO ALMOST BLACK)

SCENE 13

(TIME PASSES.

WHEN THE LIGHTS RETURN TAYLOR IS ALMOST ASLEEP IN HER CAR.

RICHARD IS SITTING WIDE AWAKE IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT.

DONNA AND CALL ARE LISTENING TO THE RADIO AND EATING.

REBECCA IS STANDING BEHIND CAR CENTRE, WATCHING.

DAVID WALKS BACK ALONG THE LINE OF CARS FROM THE THRUST, TRIUMPHANTLY WAVING THREE BOTTLES OF WINE.

TAYLOR SEES HIM AND MOVES TO MEET HIM)

TAY: Where have you been?

DAVID: I though we ought to celebrate. I found some kind people returning from a day trip to France and bought some wine off them. I even got a corkscrew too. Let's have a drink, shall we?

(DAVID RUSHES PAST HER AND BEGINS TO OPEN ALL THREE BOTTLES OF WINE ON THE ROADSIDE.

DONNA AND CAL MOVE ACROSS TO SEE WHAT THE CAUSE OF THE EXCITEMENT IS AND THEY ARE OFFERED A BOTTLE TO SHARE FOR THEMSELVES.

TAYLOR SMILES AT THE SCENE AND NOTICES REBECCA WATCHING. THEY NOD AT EACH OTHER AND REBECCA CROSSES TO TAYLOR)

REB: Everything all right now, is it?

TAY: Nearly.

REB: Not so grumpy now, is he?

TAY: (LOOKING AT DAVID'S HAPPY ANTICS) No. I just wonder how he paid for them. I've got his wallet in with my things in the car.

REB: People can behave strangely when trapped together for along time. People can be very generous, you know. Or very mean. I'm surprised Donna hasn't tried to chew one of our legs off.

(BOTH WOMEN TRY TO LAUGH)

REB: What happens now?

TAY: What do you mean?

REB: I mean, what happens now? Do you go back with David and celebrate? Or back to jealous Mike and commiserate?

TAY: (QUIETLY) I don't know. Perhaps both. Perhaps neither. (SHE LOOKS AT DAVID AGAIN) Either way, it looks like I'll have to drive.

(DAVID WAVES TAYLOR AND REBECCA OVER TO JOIN THE PARTY.

DONNA TURNS UP THE MUSIC ON THE RADIO AND WE HEAR A LIVELY POP SONG

AS THE PARTY GETS UNDERWAY. DONNA FINDS SOME PLASTIC GLASSES FROM HER FOOD KIT.

RICHARD ACCEPTS A SMALL SIP AND PASSES THE BOTTLE ON. AS THE WINE GETS PASSED AROUND, REBECCA MOUTHS TO DAVID 'WHAT'S THE TIME?' DAVID ROLLS BACK HIS SLEEVE AND WE CAN SEE THAT HIS WATCH HAS GONE.

TAYLOR REFUSES A DRINK AND MOVES AWAY TO MAKE ANOTHER PHONE CALL.

THE LIGHTS GO TO ALMOST BLACKOUT)

EDITED

DIRECTOR'S NOTES:

'**STAYING IN LANES**' explores the modern day icons of mobile communications, fast food, transitory companionship, human relationships and sexual attraction. The issues of congested roads, the reliance on quick journey times, the inconvenience of road maintenance, the stresses of motoring, etc. are familiar to us all. In extreme situations, who knows how we will individually react?

ACTION

Any action requiring getting in and out of car doors can be performed with, or without, the use of mime. It should be clear that the seats represent the inside of the car and by just standing, or walking away, will give the impression of getting out of the vehicle. The cast can mime the exterior position of the car when leaning on the roof, or bonnet.

SET & PROPS

The seats can be ordinary wooden chairs, but any added visual impact such as arm and head rests, will be an improvement. If practical, a 'front' can be made for each car containing a radiator and practical headlights (that only come on when they finally escape the traffic hold-up) If possible, Traffic Cones should adorn the stage and possibly the 'Thrust' area. Perhaps leading in from the foyer.

LIGHTING

The lighting can be as simple, or complex, as the production allows. The opening sequence starts in daylight. The play continues through dusk and late into the night. Street lighting effects should be produced if possible. The general lighting to adjust as required to highlight the performers, while allowing the atmosphere of the open road to prevail. Each car can be lit to indicate action, all three lit by reduced lighting to indicate inaction.

SOUND

Sound effects can range from, woodland sounds, car horns, multiple radios, etc.

CAST

David (50+) is sharp and decisive, although impulsive and has to be constantly controlled by Taylor. He reverts later to a more happier character that Taylor could find attractive.

Taylor (30+) is super efficient and yet there is an underlying concern for her own future. She is defensive of herself and David. She is torn between the two men in her life.

Rebecca (20+) is just interested in people and can't help prying into their personal lives. She is open and direct. Although often hovering in the background, she should not be a menacing character.

Richard (30+) has little to say, but has much anxious movement and energy. Care must be taken his movement does not distract from the other action.

Cal (Late 20s) is suffering from a cold and is disinterested in everything for most of the time. She is quite depressed and lets people know it.

Donna (Late 30s) is happy and bouncy. She is trying to keep her youth by associating with the younger girls.