

THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

A PLAY

BY THOMAS MORLEY

CAST OF CHARACTERS (IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)

James Clarke, the accused, 19

Caroline Harris, his lawyer, 40s

Detective Fiona Smith, 20s

Detective Paul Baxter, 20s

Detective Inspector Beth Black, 40s

Detective Inspector Josh Williams, 50s

Detective Ben Hardy, late 30s

A policeman (or woman)

Other characters of some importance

The Jennings Family – Phillip (40) and Angela (37), and their children, Jackson (13), Kyle (9), Max (6) and Lola (4)

The Johnson Family – Lucy (25) and her daughter Sapphire (4)

Harry Collins, a lawyer

Brad – Fiona's ex-boyfriend

Harriet – Fiona's best friend

The setting

Act One – An interview room, in a police station in Nottingham, Friday evening

Act Two – An interview room, various locations, various time periods

*A room. A desk. Four people. **James + Caroline** on one side of the desk, **Paul + Fiona** on the other. Behind them, on the back wall, a blank TV screen.*

PAUL: Do you know how old Lola Jennings is?

JAMES: No comment.

PAUL: Shall I tell you?

JAMES: No comment.

PAUL: She's four. Four years old. Which is, coincidentally, the same age as the little girl that you met today.

JAMES: No comment.

PAUL: Now, see, you didn't have to say "no comment" there, because I didn't ask you a question. Do you understand?

Pause.

PAUL: Now you can say it.

JAMES: No comment.

PAUL: Ok. How long have we been here, Detective Smith?

FIONA: Just under four hours.

PAUL: Just under four hours.

FIONA: Yep.

PAUL: Ok. *To James.* Shall we look at some pictures?

No response.

PAUL: Let's look at some pictures.

The TV on the back wall displays two pictures. They are both four-year-old girls, blonde hair and blue eyes. Very similar, but clearly not related.

PAUL: Do you know who these two are, James?

JAMES: No comment.

PAUL: Well, you know who the one on the right is. That's Sapphire Johnson, the little girl you saw in the park today. Shall we recap? You claim, and I say claim because I think you're probably lying, in fact I'm about eighty percent sure you're lying, maybe eighty five, you claim that you went for a walk through Eastcroft Park this afternoon. Correct?

JAMES: No.

PAUL: No.

JAMES: No. I went for a walk at lunchtime. Not this afternoon. Sorry.

PAUL: No, I'm sorry, I apologise, I wasn't clear enough. Let's see. *He checks some papers.* You went to Eastcroft Park at lunchtime. You entered the park at approximately twelve-oh-seven. Is that correct?

JAMES: Ye- no comment.

PAUL: Ok. You claim you were walking through Eastcroft Park, at lunch time, on your lunch break. And you decided to sit down, for a rest, by the fountain. The big fountain that sits slap bang in the centre of Eastcroft. Yes?

JAMES: No comment.

PAUL: And that's when you saw Sapphire Johnson. The little girl there. You saw Sapphire Johnson walking through the park on her own.

Pause.

PAUL: You said, in your initial statement, back when you were still talking to us, you said "it looked like she was lost". You said "she was clearly upset". Can you clarify what you mean by "upset", James? No? Was she crying? Shouting for help? Simply, I dunno, not smiling?

JAMES: No comment.

PAUL: You decided to help her, didn't you, James?

JAMES: No-

PAUL: You went and grabbed her arm and you began to walk her to the gate of the park. Because you were trying to help her. And that's when you were spotted by Sapphire's mother-

FIONA: Lucy.

PAUL: Lucy Johnson. Now, Lucy's only young. Well, depends on what you class as young. Twenty five. Older than you, James. Younger than me. Still young to be the mother of a four year old, but that's just my opinion. Anyway, when she sees you leading her daughter off to god-knows-where, she, how can I put this, she goes a bit ballistic, doesn't she?

JAMES: No comment.

PAUL: You see, you can answer that question, though, can't you, because we know the answer, and we know that you know the answer. She does go ballistic, doesn't she? She starts shouting and screaming and attracting everyone's attention and calling for police and security because she thinks she's just caught a man trying to abduct her child. Doesn't she?

JAMES: I was just trying to help.

PAUL: You were just trying to help. Of course.

JAMES: I was trying to find someone that could... you know...

PAUL: Trying to find someone that could what?

JAMES: Help me find Sapphire's mum. I told you all this.

PAUL: No. No, you haven't James. You told my officers all this. But not me. No. Because since you came in here, all you've said is "no comment".

JAMES: But that's-

Caroline lays a hand on James's arm and shakes her head.

PAUL: Detective Smith, why don't you ask our young man about the girl on the right?

FIONA: Do you know who the girl on the right is, Mr Clarke?

JAMES: No comment.

FIONA: I should think everyone in England knows who this girl is. This photograph has been shown on every news broadcast for the past few weeks. In every newspaper. All over Facebook.

JAMES: I don't have Facebook.

PAUL: You don't have Facebook?

JAMES: I don't like being spied on. I don't trust it.

FIONA: You still must have seen the photo, though?

JAMES: No comment.

FIONA: This is a photo of Lola Jennings. We've already spoken about her today, but let me jog your memory. Please feel free to interrupt me, if I'm going over old ground. These interviews can get a bit repetitive after a while, can't they? I don't want you to feel like we're wasting your time. Four weeks ago, on August the second, Lola Jennings was stolen from her parents whilst they were having a family day out at a local park. Strathcliffe Park, it's on the outskirts of town. There's an entrance on Exeter Road. Lots of families go there, especially during the summer. Get out of the house for a bit, tire the kids out. And on the afternoon of August the second, the Jennings family were at Strathcliffe Park enjoying ice creams, playing on the swings, that sort of thing. Sorry, I said afternoon, which is correct, it was "after noon". But you might prefer to call it lunchtime. Just after twelve pm. Anyway, the Jennings have four children – Lola, who you'll have heard about, and three boys, Jackson, 13, Kyle, 9, and Max, 6. And with four children, well, it's easy to lose track sometimes. They were under the impression that Lola was on the swings, with Jackson. But then, you see, it turned out that Jackson was on the roundabout. And Lola was nowhere to be seen. You'll know a lot about what happened next, of course. Hard to ignore, the amount of press coverage there's been. A missing four year old, everyone rallies round, tries to do their best to find her. They just want her to get home safe, don't they? She didn't get home safe, of course. Because last week, the police found her body. In a piece of woodland, they call it "Hunter's Barrow". There's no signs to tell you that it's called "Hunter's Barrow" of course, but that's what it says on Google maps. You probably know it better as "that patch of forest at the end of Edgestone Drive". She'd been there for three weeks. Dead. Strangled. Some sort of wire or cable. Wrapped around her tiny neck and pulled until she died. It's horrible, isn't it? Sickening, some might say. Wouldn't you agree, Mr Clarke?

JAMES: No comment.

FIONA: Do you want to know why I'm telling you this, Mr Clarke? I'll tell you why. I think you kidnapped Lola Jennings. I think you killed her. I think you hid her body in Hunter's Barrow. And I think today you were trying to do exactly the same thing to Sapphire Johnson.

CAROLINE: Detective, I would urge you not to accuse my client unless you have the evidence-

FIONA: I'm getting there. Thank you.

CAROLINE: Are you? Because we've been here a long time, and so far you've presented nothing but baseless accusations.

FIONA: We've been giving your client the opportunity to be honest with us.

CAROLINE: He is being honest with you. He answered the questions that your sergeants put to him when they were first called this afternoon. And he refuses to answer any questions connected to the Jennings' case because he has nothing to do with it.

FIONA: We'll see.

JAMES: I don't know anything about that, I swear. I was just trying to help the other girl. Sapphire. I don't know anything about Lola Jennings.

FIONA: Ok. But, just for my own sanity, can we all agree here, for a second, that those two little girls are very similar. Yes? Both born in the same year, both from the same town, both blonde hair, both blue eyes. Very similar, right? Eerily similar, some might say. Right?

JAMES: Well, yeah, I mean-

FIONA: Both very pretty little girls, right?

JAMES: Yes, both pretty, but I don't-

PAUL: Do you often refer to four year old girls as "pretty"?

JAMES: What? No, I was just repeating what she said, I-

PAUL: Strange thing to say, about a child. Pretty.

JAMES: I didn't- I was just agreeing. That they look similar. That's all.

PAUL: Are you sure?

JAMES: *Defiantly* No comment.

FIONA: Where were you at midday on August the second?

JAMES: No comment.

FIONA: Were you at Strathcliffe Park?

JAMES: No comment.

FIONA: Have you ever been to Strathcliffe Park?

JAMES: No comment.

FIONA: Did you ever meet Lola Jennings?

JAMES: No comment.

PAUL: Let's take a break. I need a refill.

FIONA: Interview suspended nineteen-forty-five.

Fiona presses a button on the desk. Fiona and Paul both pick up their mugs and leave the room. And then, the scene begins to change. James and Caroline remain seated, and time continues moving for them, so maybe they fidget, whisper quietly to each other, Caroline giving James advice.

*The action occurs in the space in front of the stage, on the same level as the audience. A desk is brought in, with a computer monitor (displaying the same images as the TV screen), recording equipment, pens and notebooks, something that looks a bit like a sound desk. Two chairs, on one sits **Beth**, on the other **Josh**. At the other end of the room, a coffee machine. This is the room on the other side of the one-way mirror. It is clear Beth and Josh have been watching the entire interview, Josh making notes in his notebook.*

Fiona and Paul now enter this room. They refill their mugs from the coffee machine during the following exchange.

FIONA: How do you think it's going?

BETH: Slow progress.

FIONA: She's told him to stay quiet.

BETH: That much is clear.

PAUL: He wants to talk to us. Explain himself.

BETH: Keep working on him. He'll start talking soon. We've got the CCTV images ready whenever you want them.

FIONA: Great.

BETH: Remember, as soon as he starts talking, whatever he's saying, he'll begin to slip up.

FIONA: You think he's guilty?

BETH: He's got to be.

FIONA: Josh?

JOSH: Too early to say. Show him the CCTV. Get him rattled.

PAUL: I'm worried if we rattle him too much he might shut down completely. Guilty or not, he's in way over his head here, and he knows it.

BETH: You're doing a good job. Both of you. Keep doing what you're doing. We've got forensics at his house so if we pick anything up, we'll let you know.

FIONA: Ready?

PAUL: Ready.

*They leave. The action is now split between both the interview room (on the stage) and the observation room (in front of the stage). Both scenes play out at the same time, and most of the time the action in the observation room is basically people sitting and watching. Occasionally, though, there will be speech. To avoid any confusion, anything occurring in the observation room will appear in **bold text** whilst anything occurring in the interview room will appear in normal text.*

JOSH: I'm not sure.

BETH: What?

JOSH: I'm not sure he's guilty.

BETH: I'm not sure he's innocent.

Fiona and Paul re-enter.

FIONA: Would you like a drink?

JAMES: No, I don't-

FIONA: Doesn't have to be coffee. Water? Tea?

JAMES: No. Thank you.

PAUL: Caroline?

CAROLINE: Let's just get on with it.

PAUL: Fair enough. Interview recommences nineteen-fifty.

FIONA: How old are you, James?

JAMES: No comment.

FIONA: That's ok, we know how old you are. We have your provisional licence downstairs. With your phone, your wallet. You turned nineteen on the fifteenth of June. Where do you work?

JAMES: No comment.

FIONA: We know that too, of course. You work at East Market Medical Centre, in administration-

CAROLINE: Detective, with all due respect, if you already know the answers to these questions, can we perhaps move this along a little and get to the point...?

FIONA: I'm going to show you a map, Mr Clarke, of the local area. *She nods towards the mirror.*

Beth hits a button. The image on the PC monitor changes to a map.

Simultaneously, the image on the TV screen changes to show the same.

FIONA: There are two locations marked on the map. Would you like to identify them for me?

No response.

FIONA: Not a problem. The first, on the left, that's East Market Medical Centre, where you've been working for the last six months. And the one on the right, that's Eastcroft Park, where you were picked up by our officers this afternoon. Now, I'm not great at geography, but that looks like quite a walk to me. About twenty five minutes, wouldn't you agree, Detective Baxter?

PAUL: At least.

FIONA: At least twenty five minutes. How long do you get for lunch, Mr Clarke?

JAMES: No comment.

FIONA: Can't be more than an hour, can it? No, I wouldn't have thought so. So, twenty five minutes there, twenty five minutes back, that doesn't give you long to enjoy the park. Do you often go to Eastcroft Park at lunch time, Mr Clarke?

JAMES: No comment.

FIONA: Do you go there every day, Mr Clarke?

JAMES: No comment.

PAUL: I can answer that one for you, Detective Smith.

FIONA: Hm?

PAUL: He doesn't.

FIONA: Doesn't he?

PAUL: Not every day, no. He definitely didn't go to Eastcroft Park on August the second.

FIONA: And how do you know that?

PAUL: Because, we have CCTV from twelve eleven pm on August the second that shows you walking down Exeter Road, on the other side of town.

He nods at the mirror.

Beth hits another button. The map is replaced by a CCTV image of James walking down a road. The time and date are clearly displayed.

PAUL: This is you, isn't it?

JAMES: No comment.

PAUL: It looks like you. You're wearing the same jacket. There's an entrance to Strathcliffe Park on Exeter Road. Did you go to Strathcliffe Park on August the second, James?

JAMES: No comment.

PAUL: You do realise that this CCTV image places you in the area at the exact time that Lola Jennings was taken from her parents?

JAMES: No comment.

FIONA: Do you have a girlfriend, Mr Clarke?

JAMES: No comment.

FIONA: Or a boyfriend?

JAMES: No comment.

FIONA: You see, you can answer that. I mean, either way, it's not going to incriminate you. It's not going to make you look guilty. Lots of people have relationships. Lots of people don't. It doesn't make any difference either way to our investigations. So, I'll ask you again: Are you in a relationship?

JAMES: No comment.

PAUL: You know, if this goes to court, a jury will make a decision on your fate. And saying no comment to us all the time, it's fine, it buys you time, it makes our job a lot more difficult. But if this does go to court, I'll tell you now, a jury will not like this. They prefer people who help with investigations, especially where young girls are concerned. To a jury, saying no comment all the time... makes it look like you've got something to hide...

CAROLINE: Detective Baxter, I must ask you-

PAUL: Sorry. I'm sorry.

FIONA: We spoke to your mother. She's here, she's downstairs. Waiting. She says you're single. Then again, nineteen year old men, they don't always tell their mothers everything about their private lives, do they? So it's possible that she's wrong. So just tell us. Are you in a relationship?

JAMES: Whatever I say, you're just going to twist it.

FIONA: Are we?

CAROLINE: James-

JAMES: No, because you told me to stay quiet, you told me to say no comment, because they'll try and twist my words and use it to their advantage. They already did it, by making me say that little girls are pretty. When that's not what I meant, I just meant, that they looked the same, I got confused, and you made me confused and now you're twisting all my words and making me say things I don't mean and I don't want you to do that but you're right. Because saying no comment all the time does make me look guilty. And I'm not. I'm not guilty. I don't even know anything about Lola Jennings. I swear.

CAROLINE: James-

JAMES: No! No. Because if they're going to try and pin this on me, if they're going to try and make it look like I did something, then I'm not going to let them do that without having my say first.

CAROLINE: James-

PAUL: If he wants to talk, I suggest we let him talk. James?

JAMES: I go for walks most lunchtimes. I walk and I find somewhere to sit and I eat my sandwiches and then I walk back. And sometimes I go to Eastcroft Park and sometimes I go to Strathcliffe Park and sometimes I just go and sit in the centre of town on the benches outside M&S. And I only have an hour for lunch, but it doesn't take me ten minutes to eat two sandwiches, so I walk for about twenty minutes, I sit and eat and watch the world and just enjoy the outdoors for a bit, and then I walk back to work. And I do that every day. Different places. Today I decided to go to Eastcroft Park and when I saw that little girl – Sapphire – when I saw her on her own shouting for her mummy, I went up to her and I asked her what was wrong, and when she told me, I took her hand and I started to walk her towards the park rangers office. Which just happens to be by the main gate. And then the little girl's mum saw me and she went... as you put it, she went ballistic. It's fine. I get it. A strange man leading your child away by the hand, anyone would. But it was just a misunderstanding.

JOSH: Told you he was innocent.

BETH: He's lying.

JOSH: What?

BETH: Wait for it.

PAUL: And on August the second?

JAMES: On August the second I went to Strathcliffe Park. But I didn't see Lola Jennings. I didn't see any of her family. And I left before any commotion began. Before any policemen turned up. I didn't know what had happened until I got home and turned on the TV.