

EXTRACT

# THE CULTURE

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THE CULTURE  
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# **The Culture**

**By Laura Jackson**

A play for two actors.

Katie Monroe - 24

William Archer - 24

Will and Katie live together in an apartment, they have been friends since childhood. Will is gay, Katie a woman: therefore battling some similar forces.

## **Projection 1**

*A cartoon montage of people interacting in bars, on the street, at work – showing figures in a virtual world. Men and women, talking to each other, women talking to each other, men talking to each other.*

*Speech bubbles starting off friendly, some popping up here and there until there are many all over the screen at once.*

*“Hey” “Hey” “Hi” “Hello” “How are you?” “Good.” “What’s Up” “Not much” “Good to see you”*

*Focusing in on the bar: Conversations become flirty – flirtations between men and women, between men, between women*

*“You’re cute” “Thanks”*

*“Single?” “Not anymore.”*

*“Want a drink?” “I want you.”*

*Back onto the street, bar and office, conversations become harassment*

*“Hey baby” “Oi faggot” “Nice tits” “Watch out cock-sucker” “I’d fuck that.” “Slut.” “Bend over.”*

*“Dyke” “Come here homo.”*

*Music underneath goes from cute and happy, to more and more ominous. Music continues under the following lines:*

**From Offstage:**

**Katie:**

**“FUCK YOU, SLUT. YOU SHOULD BE GRATEFUL!”**

**Will:**

**“YOU WANT SOME OF THIS, FAGGOT?”**

## Scene 1

### Will:

I was walking home from the station, about midnight. I'd been out to this shitty little bar, and I'd been flirting with a real-live guy.

He *leans into me* and tells me to go buy us another round. The second I have my back turned, he has his tongue down the throat of the guy next to me, his hand up in this guy's perfect hair. I just left. I couldn't get it out of my head.

### Katie:

I went to this gender studies class once, third year Uni... maybe? First the lecturer asked all the men, "what do you do when you're walking down the street, to keep yourselves safe?" The men looked around, a bit bemused, and then one brave guy kind of squared his shoulders and said: "This is ah, probably the wrong the answer, but um... nothing mate."

### Will:

I couldn't get it out of my head. So much that I wasn't paying any attention to where I was or how I was walking. It wasn't until I heard her gasp, that I even saw the woman walking down the street in front of me.

But, she was profoundly aware of me.

### Katie:

"Nothing, mate." The men all laughed a bit uncomfortably, and then the lecturer went to the whiteboard, and said "all right ladies, what do *you* do when you're walking down the street to keep yourselves safe?"

The answers started coming too quick to write them up. So many little tricks to try to avoid the dangers of being a woman. Don't walk down the street alone. Lock the car as soon as you get into it. Thread your keys through your fingers to punch an attacker. Don't let your phone go flat in case you end up in someone's boot.

### Will:

She was profoundly aware of me. I'd only *just* noticed her, but she knew I was there and she was... fucking hell. She- I was just walking- I wasn't even looking at her! But she was a woman walking alone at night, and I was a man walking behind her.

She was looking over her shoulder and then straight ahead, marching on in stilettos and setting a cracking pace and I thought- fucking hell. She's scared of me. She is scared of ME.

And here's the fucked thing. My initial reaction wasn't, "oh shit, better back off. I've scared the lady." No, my reaction was actually to be kind of pissed.

Cause in my head I was like "Fuck off lady. Just because I'm a dude and you're a chick. Just because it's late and dark and whatever the fuck else, doesn't mean I'm going to drag you behind that dumpster and cut you into little pieces. Fuck you, you don't even know me."

That was my reaction. Anger. Angry. That's fucked up.

**Katie:**

Don't let your phone go flat in case you end up in someone's boot. There were so many things that the whiteboard was full and we had to stop. The group looked up and fell silent. The men couldn't imagine feeling so unsafe that these kinds of precautions were necessary.

Then *she (revelation of gender)* asked the women, "What do you do to keep yourselves safe in your own home?"

**Will:**

That's fucked up. And look, in my defence it did dawn on me, that maybe I was responding in an inappropriate manner – and I think it's pretty obvious that I was actually pretty fucking pissed at the guy in the bar and my anger was nothing to do with this woman but- Even me. Even someone who-

"Yes, she's scared of you." I thought. But isn't it worse for her? The one who can't even walk down the street?

"Imagine feeling like her." I remember thinking that.

There it is, though. That's the thing. I feel exactly like that.

**Katie:**

"What do you do to keep yourselves safe in your own home?" There was this shocked silence as we all stared at the lecturer. And then she rubbed off all our tricks for keeping ourselves safe in the street... safe from strangers... and she wrote – I'll never forget it – in big letters across the whiteboard.

"In Australia, intimate partner violence is the number one, non disease related cause of death, disability or illness of women between the ages of fifteen and forty four."

**Projection 2**

*"In Australia, intimate partner violence is the number one, non disease related cause of death, disability or illness of women between the ages of fifteen and forty four."*

## Scene 2

*Katie and Will's living room. Katie moves to sit on the floor with books/papers at her feet. Will enters.*

**Will:** Oh god. Look at your hair. You're not coping.

**Katie:** Morning.

**Will:** Is this some kind of I-just-rolled-out-of-bed side-bun? What are you working on so seriously?

*Katie pushes away her work.*

**Katie:** Practicing my acceptance speech for when they announce I'm Prime Minister.

**Will:** There might need to be an election. And you might need to be a candidate...

**Katie:** I would be an excellent Prime Minister.

**Will:** I've been saying that since we were eight. Except, you'd have to stop dressing like... *(gestures)*  
You'd have to start wearing sensible clothes.

**Katie:** No red bob, no blazers.

**Will:** Babe. You'd have to cut your hair off. I'll be your stylist. Turtle necks?

**Katie:** Skivys.

**Will:** Polo shirts.

**Katie:** Two tone green shoes.

**Will:** Grey jogging suit.

**Katie:** No.

**Will:** Matching grey jogging suit.

**Katie:** No!

**Will:** No hood. With gathered ankles.

**Katie:** Ok, we were having fun, and now... you're fired.

**Will:** Excuse me? Miss cerise shirt. Even if I did dress you in a grey jogging suit, two weeks later, all the little tweens would be out buying grey jogging suits so they could look just like you.

**Katie:** Cerise? Looks like plum to me.

**Will:** *(Beat/Abrupt change of thought)* I'm sorry that dick slapped your arse. I should've hit him.

**Katie:** He was a fucking mountain!



**Will:** I wish I was a mountain.

**Katie:** Stop. Pact.

**Will:** We were eight.

**Katie:** You Judge. Me Prime Minister. Just tell me what laws to put through; we'll be fucking Captain Planet!

**Will:** Oh my god.

**Katie:** Oh my god!

**Both:** *They do a secret handshake with actions for each word. Earth, Fire. Wind! Water. Heart!*

**Will:** I can't believe I still remember that!

**Katie:** You never know when you might need a Captain Planet handshake.

*She is still holding his hands/reaches for his hands.*

**Katie:** If you start punching people these delicate piano-player's hands will be ruined. And then who will I do secret handshakes with?

**Will:** Alright. But I'd give fuckers like him so much community service for sexual harassment, they'd be the ones with fucked up hands.

### **Projection 3**

*Katie's Instagram – a picture of Katie and Will as kids.*

*"Planeteers for life! xx" Planet emoticon, sunshine emoticon, heart*

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