

# THE BRIDGE

By  
**ALEX JONES**

1999 *Pentabus Theatre tour - September- November*  
2002 *Mouthpiece Theatre, October*  
2010 *Rewritten for Mouthpiece Theatre tour, September*

## **A Supernatural Thriller**

Teenage couple Tom and Lucy are on the run. Offered shelter by a mysterious stranger, they hide away in a shadowy ancient house. As the candlelight licks the panelled walls, Lucy becomes convinced she'd been in this room before - hundreds of years before... A spine tingling supernatural thriller that hurtles Tom and Lucy between their twentieth century present and their civil war past lives, *The Bridge* will keep you on the edge of your seat and send shivers up your spine.

The subject matter, both historically accurate, coupled with social comment also charts how things have not changed that for much certain classes of society, and how history can sometimes seem to repeat itself until authority is truly challenged.

**SYNOPSIS & SAMPLE SCENES  
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**CHARACTERS**

LUCY SHELDON - 17 YEARS OLD.

TOM DENHAM - 18 YEARS OLD.

JOHN ATKIN - LOOKS ABOUT 40 YEARS OLD.

Lucy and tom speak with quite broad Worcester accents.  
John atkin has the sound of the accent about him,  
but it should not be so apparent.

When the script says “17th century”, then the  
actors will wear costume of that period.

*For Tony*

## ACT 1

## SCENE 1

*An attic room in an old town house in the city of Worcester. The room is plain and puritan in style. It has panelled walls, shuttered windows and a beamed ceiling. There are candle-sconces about the walls and a candlestick on a plain oak chest by a bed with drapes. There is an open fireplace with logs laid by. The lights fade to darkness and crackly music from the 17th Century fills the space, but it is quickly dissolved into the ether of modern music and speech as it becomes apparent that we are listening to the tuning of a radio. It settles on a jingle for a local radio station (BBC Hereford and Worcester).*

V.O News coming up in five minutes, to take us there, here's...

*The latest chart hit is playing and fades away as the lights come up. TOM and LUCY enter through a concealed door, which almost matches the panelling. JOHN ATKIN follows them in with a torch. he busies himself lighting candles, setting a fire with logs, etc.*

TOM Thanks... thanks like.

LUCY Yeah - thanks.

TOM I... I dun't know how it happened, like.

LUCY He just cum in.

TOM Shoutin' an' threatenin'.

LUCY I was really scared.

TOM I din't mean no harm.

LUCY He's not violent.

TOM I'm not.

LUCY It's not in his nature.

TOM He just cum in shoutin' an' threatenin'.

LUCY We tried t' clear out.

TOM But he weren't havin' none of it.

LUCY He was like a madman.

TOM Just bust into the room, like.

LUCY Swearin' an' cussin'. I was frightened.

TOM If he'd gid us a minute, we'd've cleared out...

LUCY He was swingin' at us; had a baseball bat.

TOM I wouldn't hurt a fly.

LUCY He wouldn't; he's a softy.

TOM But he was swingin' at us.

LUCY I thought he was gonna kill us.

TOM It was self-preservation, like.

LUCY He was like a madman.

TOM I said, "Calm down, mate - let's talk about it".

LUCY He did, but he weren't havin' none of it.

TOM Hit me he did. Look at me - I'm bleeding. (*Rolls up his sleeve*).

LUCY *Self-preservation*, like he said.

TOM Kept gooin' on about how it was private property.

LUCY We din't mean no harm.

TOM We was on'y gonna stay a couple o' nights.

LUCY Just till we could find summat permanent.

TOM I mean - it was empty.

LUCY He was like a madman; just bust in he did.

TOM Swingin' a baseball bat; lashin' out...

LUCY Tom weren't malicious.

TOM Just instinctive - it was me or him, so I grabbed a bottle.

LUCY It was horrible.

TOM Hit him, n' he went down, like.

LUCY We thought it was safe. A friend of ours, Mel...

TOM Lucy..!

LUCY I mean, just a friend; someone I knew from the home, her said it was a safe squat.

TOM He took us by surprise; he on'y had t' say get out. But he layed into us...

LUCY He did - swearin' he was, cussin' an' swearin'; sayin' how it was his property, his private property.

TOM I mean what was I t' do? He might've killed me or Lucy.

LUCY Tom wouldn't hurt a fly; a big softy he is.

*Pause*

TOM Anyway, thanks like.

JOHN That's all right.

TOM We wun't stay long; just lay low for a while.

*Pause*

JOHN            You're welcome.

LUCY            We'm very grateful.

JOHN            (*Nods*).

TOM             I hope he's all right. I din't mean nuthin' malicious.

JOHN            I'm sure.

LUCY            He just bust in.

TOM             I hope he's all right.

JOHN            (*Takes a radio out of his pocket*). Local news said he was found lying on the floor - blood pouring from his head.

*Pause*

TOM             So d'yer think he's all right?

*Pause as JOHN switches the radio on and slips between stations. He switches it off and puts it back in his pocket.*

                  Thanks for bringin' us here.

JOHN            No problem.

TOM             We wun't stay long.

JOHN            Stay as long as you like.

LUCY            Why..? Why am yer doin' this? Why did yer bring us here?

JOHN            Just helping a fellow traveller in distress.

TOM             Well thanks, like.

JOHN            I've been in trouble myself in the past.

TOM             Yeah?

JOHN            So I know what you're going through.

TOM             S' good on yer, like. I can't believe it's 'appened.

LUCY            Broad bloody daylight an' all.

TOM             I dun't think we was recognised though.

LUCY            It was broad daylight, Tom; street full of shoppers.

TOM             Think we looked conspicuous?

LUCY            Covered in blood, bustin' through a boarded-up window?

TOM             So... y' think we was recognised?

JOHN            Well you can stay here; let things cool down.

TOM             Thanks mate.

JOHN            You're very welcome.

LUCY           What a nightmare!

TOM            Tell me about it!

LUCY           I 'opes you en't...

TOM            What?

LUCY           Y' know -

TOM            No Lucy - what, for Christ sake?!

LUCY           Y' know - killed him.

TOM            Dun't say that! *Killed him?* Y' dun't think I 'ave, do yer?

LUCY           He went down like a sack of spuds, he did.

TOM            It dun't mean I killed him.

JOHN           Radio said he was in hospital.

TOM            Tha's not s' bad.

JOHN           Intensive care.

TOM            I can't believe all this is 'appenin'! One minute we'm settlin' into a nice cosy squat tryin' t' get a signal for Channel 5, next the bloody landlord's chargin' at me like the Terminator or summat!

LUCY           We shouldn't've run away from it.

JOHN           No, you did the right thing; best to get out of the way. I've been in this kind of situation before.

LUCY           Yeah?

JOHN           Sounds like bad news, this landlord. Prosecute you for certain.

LUCY           He had a baseball bat.

TOM            He did.

LUCY           We should goo t' the police really, Tom.

JOHN           No, best not.

TOM            No way!

JOHN           Best not to.

TOM            They'd lock me up.

JOHN           For certain.

LUCY           I dun't believe this!

*Pause*

TOM            S' a weird place... I mean, this your'n, like?

JOHN           It belongs to me.

TOM            It's... it's old, n' it?

JOHN            You can stay here till the fuss has died down.

TOM            Thanks.

LUCY           P'raps we should goo t' the police, Tom?

TOM            No way!

LUCY           I'm scared.

JOHN           Tell you what, I'll pop out in a while; check the situation, get the lay of the land so to speak.

TOM            Thanks mate.

JOHN           I'll let you know what's going on. But I really wouldn't go to the police.

LUCY           I dunno.

TOM            He's right, Luce - a lad like me, bit of a record already, breakin' into his gaff.

LUCY           Squattin'.

TOM            It's still breakin' an' enterin'; an' what if he does..?

LUCY           He wun't die; he's in hospital, tha's all.

JOHN           Intensive care.

*Pause*

                 I'll get you some blankets.

TOM            Thanks mate.

JOHN           (*Offers his hand*) John - John Atkin.

TOM            (*Shakes his hand*) Thanks John. I'm...

JOHN           Thomas.

TOM            *Tom*, n' her's Lucy.

JOHN           (*Smiles*) I'll get your bedding. I'd at least stay the night if I were you.

TOM            Thanks John, s' good on yer.

JOHN           It's no trouble... Oh, the bathroom's just down the stairs on the right when you need it, or there's a chamber pot under the bed.

TOM            A what?!

JOHN           No water up here, I'm afraid. I'll bring you a jug.

TOM            No 'lectricity either?

JOHN           Not up here, no. But there's plenty of candles in that chest - help yourself.

                 JOHN *exits*.

LUCY           I dun't like this, Tom.

TOM            Calm down.

LUCY S' not right all this; we *should* goo t' the police.

TOM I en't gooin' an' there's an end to it.

*Pause*

LUCY He's weird - he scares me.

TOM He's just helpin' us out.

LUCY Why? He en't ever seen us before.

TOM You heard him; he's bin in trouble himself, knows what we'm gooin' through.

LUCY He scares me, Tom. I wanna get out of here.

TOM Stay a while, Luce for me, please? I'm scared too - look at me I'm shakin' - (*Holds his hand out*).

*Pause*

LUCY This place is weird.

TOM S' old, n' it?

LUCY S' like a museum.

TOM S' an old buildin', they all am this part of town.

LUCY I en't seen nowhere like this before.

TOM S' an attic room, innit? Bet nobody's used it for years - still got the old shutters.

LUCY It's weird - it dun't feel right.

TOM Gie it a rest, eh Luce?

LUCY I'm just sayin'; I dun' like it.

*Pause*

TOM I 'opes he dun't die.

LUCY Oh sweet'ear! (*Hugs him*) It just 'appened... we'll 'ave t' wait an' see.

TOM I wouldn' want t' be a murderer.

LUCY You'm not a murderer.

TOM Look at me - I'm shakin'...

LUCY What was *he* doin' at Powick Bridge?

TOM *We* was there.

LUCY But I mean, at three o' clock in the mornin'?

TOM Jus' walkin' I s'pose; s' a free country.

LUCY Three o' clock in the mornin'?

TOM *We* was there.

LUCY 'Cause we was hidin'.

TOM He was just out for a late night walk.

LUCY He seemed t' cum from nowhere.

TOM Dun' talk daft.

LUCY Turned round an' there he was; nearly shat meself.

TOM Well it's good on him to help us.

LUCY How did he know we was the ones the filth was after?

TOM S' obvious innit? The two on us hidin' under Powick Bridge in the middle o' nowhere in the middle o' the night.

LUCY I dunno, I dun' like it.

TOM We'll just stay the night, okay?

LUCY I can't believe all this's 'appened. Maybe I should've stuck it out at the home.

TOM Dun' yer wanna be wi' me?

LUCY Yeah 'course I does, *lover boy!* You'm about the on'y person who's ever cared about me; s' just this mess I'm thinkin' about.

TOM If we could on'y've got a flat or summat, n' then I could've looked for a job; nobody'll tek yer on if you'm homeless. N' there's no way I could stay at home any longer; Mum's new boyfriend's a real tosser!

LUCY That Ray fellah, n' it?

TOM Wanted me out from the day he cum. Kept gooin' on he did, windin' me up.

LUCY *Tosser!* Well rid on him!

TOM Smackin' me about when me Mum weren't around. N' her wouldn't believe me.

LUCY I told yer, her didn't wanna believe yer; s' a new man around, n' it? Her dun' wanna lose him.

TOM Me own Mum, n' her didn't believe me!

LUCY Parents en't what they used t' be.

TOM If I had a kid... I mean, y' know if I did, if I ever did, like...

LUCY (*Laughs*) Aw, wants a little babbie, does yer?

TOM Well yer know - one day; I'm jus' sayin' if I did then I'd be a real good Dad; tek it t' football matches n' t' the cinema n' stuff.

LUCY Would yer?

TOM Yeah.

LUCY My Dad never did that kind o' stuff; the kind o' stuff he did... *bastard!* N' *they'm* just as bad at the home n' all. I 'ates 'em I does.

TOM Yeah, life's shit, n' it?

LUCY 'Least I got you now.

TOM           *(Smiles)* Yeah you got me all right, girl. Luce..?

LUCY           Yeah?

TOM           D' *you* wanna babbie?

LUCY           Not right at this moment, no.

TOM           Leave off - you know what I mean.

LUCY           Gonna knock me up, am yer?

TOM           We'd be good parents.

LUCY           A bit young just yet.

TOM           Get a flat then if y' was pregnant.

LUCY           God, you'm dead romantic, you am!

TOM           Cum 'ere -  
*They kiss.*

LUCY           Do'st thou love me, Tom?

TOM           What?

LUCY           Sayest thou love me.

TOM           What yer talkin' about?

LUCY           Say yer love me, jus' say it. I like to 'ear y' say it, tha's all.

TOM           I loves yer, yer know I do.  
*They kiss again.*

LUCY           Tis sweet to hear thee say it, Tom.

TOM           Lucy, what're yer talkin' about?

LUCY           You, n' I?

TOM           You was talkin' funny.

LUCY           No I weren't.

TOM           You're weird sometimes.  
*JOHN approaches, off. His radio is switched on. He enters with blankets and a jug of water.*

JOHN           *(Switching off the radio)* Found you some blankets out.

TOM           Oh thanks, mate.  
*He places the jug in a ceramic bowl and throws the blankets on the bed.*

JOHN           Just listened to the local news. They're out looking for you still.

LUCY           Oh God no!

TOM           They named us?

JOHN Put out a description, that's all.

TOM Well tha's summat, I s'pose.

JOHN So I wouldn't go out just yet.

TOM No, best not to.

*Pause*

This place - s' old, n' it?

JOHN Stood here for 400 years or so.

TOM En't done much decoratin', have yer?

LUCY *Tom..!*

TOM No, I'm jus' sayin', like yer said; it's a like a museum, one o' them rooms yer see when they recreate the past, like.

JOHN Figured in the Civil War, this place.

TOM Yeah?

JOHN So they say.

TOM Civil war, eh?

JOHN Bit of a coincidence I found you at Powick Bridge, really. That's where the first skirmish of the war took place, and the very last battle that put an end to the conflict: "Say you have been at Worcester, where England's sorrows began, and where they are happily ended."

TOM Y' what?

JOHN That's what Hughe Peter said after the fray - he was the Parliamentary chaplain.

TOM *(Laughs)* Y' learn summat new every day, dun' yer?

JOHN "Happily ended" for some, eh Lucy?

*Pause*

Come smile now good Maid, this haven is safe.

LUCY *(Smiles)* Thank you sir.

TOM *(Laughs)* "Sir?"

JOHN It's good to see a fair Maid smile again in this City.

LUCY Your pardon, sir; it has been a weary time for us all. It is long since I have been wont to smile.

TOM Eh?

JOHN Then practice here, Maid. Tis a safe refuge, and happily now your troubles are at an end.

LUCY *(Curtseys)* I will endeavour to, sir.

TOM What you two talkin' about?

JOHN I will find you a bandage for your wound. Was it a musket-ball?

TOM No... it was a baseball bat, n' I cut myself on some glass climbing through the window. What you talkin' about - "musket-ball?"

JOHN (*Smiles*) Make yourself at home. If I hear anything else I'll let you know. It's an old bed, but very comfortable.

TOM Thanks.

JOHN Right, I'll see you in the morning.

TOM Yeah.

JOHN *exits, switching on his radio as he does.*

What was all that about?

LUCY What?

TOM All that "Your pardon, sir" stuff?

LUCY What?

TOM You two - (*Mocking*) "It has been a long time since I have been... *wotsit t' smile.*"

LUCY You'm not mekin' sense, Tom.

TOM *I'm* not mekin' sense?! N' he kept callin' you *Maid*.

LUCY Who did?

TOM Him - that bloke, John Atkin.

LUCY He never called me nuthin'. Leave off, Tom.

TOM He did!

LUCY Calm down, Tom; you'm imaginin' stuff.

TOM But he did, an' you n' all; you was talkin' funny, like.

LUCY Leave off, eh Tom - I'm knackered.

TOM Yeah... yeah okay, me too. Let's get our heads down, eh?

LUCY *begins to arrange the blankets on the bed.*

LUCY I dunno about all this, Tom. Maybe we should just get out of here?

TOM We'll goo in the mornin'.

LUCY I dun' like it here.

TOM Yeah... Oh, I 'opes he en't gonna die - *intensive care?* Dun't sound too promisin', do it?

LUCY It was self-protection, Tom - he was lampin' yer.

TOM I know, but all the same...

LUCY *kicks off her shoes and climbs into bed.*

LUCY           Cum an' gie us a cuddle.  
                  TOM *kicks off his shoes and climbs in next to her.*

TOM            Bit cramped.

LUCY           It's cosy.

TOM            Yeah!  
                  TOM *touches her under the blankets.*

LUCY           N' y' can cut that out!

TOM            I just thought...

LUCY           I en't in no mood for that; n' I'm surprised you am after what's 'appened.

TOM            Well - y' know?

LUCY           You'm just a randy bugger! Cum on, lover boy; gie me a cuddle an' keep me warm - it's freezin' in here.  
                  TOM *blows out the candle.*

TOM            Good night "fair Maid". (*Laughs*).

LUCY           You'm daft, you am.

TOM            But yer love me?

LUCY           Tha's 'cause I'm daft n' all. Let's get t' sleep, n' we'll clear out fust thing in the mornin'.

TOM            Night Luce!

LUCY           (*Kisses him*) Night sweet' eart!  
  
                  Lights fade to black and the static of the radio fills the space - it has an odd reverberation to it. Again it flicks through stations, talk radio, local radio, pop music, strange voices (maybe a shakespeare play) from the past, eventually settling on a classical music station, playing music from the 17th century.

## SCENE 2

*That evening, THE PRESENT. LUCY and TOM are asleep in bed. the door opens and JOHN ENTERS carrying a torch and a jug, he's a bit drunk. he gently wakes LUCY.*

JOHN Lucy, may I speak with thee?

LUCY (*Waking*) What is it?

JOHN Shh! There's no need to wake the lad.

LUCY (*Climbs out of bed*) What's the matter?

JOHN I... I've been thinking of you... of your welfare I mean.

LUCY Thank you sir.

JOHN Now that you have no property, where will you go, what will you do?

LUCY I don't know, but 'opes that we may return to our former tasks one day.

*Pause*

JOHN I have some perry here; will you share it with me?

LUCY It is late, sir.

JOHN We may sit by my fire and talk awhile.

LUCY It is late.

JOHN You say right - it *is* late. Yet I find I have need of some company. I've been alone here for some time; it would be good to prattle to someone.

LUCY I daren't leave Tom, sir. If he wakes he will be frightened for me.

JOHN Then will you drink here?

*Pause*

Come take a sup -

TOM *begins to stir. he reaches out for LUCY.*

TOM Luce..? Luce, wheer am yer?

LUCY *turns to TOM'S voice and JOHN exits.*

Luce..?

TOM *IS awake proper now, he climbs out of bed.*

Luce, wha's up? You all right?

*she turns to face JOHN again, but he has gone.*

LUCY He... he was 'ere, Tom; dids't thou not see him?

TOM What? (*Concerned*) You'm sleepwalkin' or summat; c'mon back t' bed -

LUCY I thought...

TOM What?

LUCY I dunno... am I dreamin'?

TOM You'm dreamin'. S' bin a crazy day, girl; c'mon back t' bed, n' I'll cuddle yer - yeah?

LUCY Yeah... yeah tha's what I need.

*They climb into bed.*

It were'n a dream, though.

TOM Goo t' sleep now.

LUCY It felt...

TOM Goo t' sleep; s' okay.

LUCY Is it?

TOM Yeah.

LUCY Is it?

TOM It's okay.

LUCY It is sweet.

TOM Eh?

LUCY It is a good perry.

TOM You'm dreamin'. (*Kisses her*)

*TOM blows out the candle - darkness. the room is invaded by the crackle of radio static, shifting through channels - all melancholic music from different periods of history, finally dissolving again into static phase.*

## SCENE 3

*The next morning. LUCY is sitting on the bed, TOM is trying to open the shutters, but they won't budge.*

TOM *(Gives up)* Stuck solid..! God, s' bleedin' dismal in 'ere!

LUCY Let's goo then -

TOM *(Sighs)* Let's find out wha's 'appenin' out there fust.

LUCY I wanna goo *now*.

TOM Oh ar, an' where to?

LUCY Anywhere... I jus' wanna goo.

TOM Why? You'm not mekin' sense.

*Pause*

LUCY It's *him*.

TOM John Atkin? What about him?

LUCY I... I dun' trust him. What if he turns us in?

TOM If he was gonna turn us in, he'd've done it by now.

LUCY He's... he's gonna do summat bad.

TOM How'd yer know that?

LUCY I just does.

TOM D'yer know him, or summat?

LUCY I... think so.

TOM Yer think so? Either yer do or yer don't?

LUCY He's... he's gonna do summat... *(Begins to cry)*.

*TOM kneels by her, comforting.*

TOM Hey, hey, cum on girl, what yer gerrin' upset about?

LUCY I'm scared.

TOM Look, tell yer what - you wait here an' I'll pop out; see if I can find anythin' out, see if it's safe, like.

LUCY Y' mustn't, Tom. Y' mustn't leave me here.

TOM I'm cumin' back, dun' worry.

LUCY If we both dun' leave, summat'll 'appen here.

TOM You had yer chance last night, girl.

LUCY Dun' joke about it - I mean it!

TOM We'll be all right, trust me, I'll cum straight back.

*TOM goes to exit.*

LUCY Tom -

TOM *(Stops)* What now?

LUCY I had a dream last night.

TOM *(Smiles)* Oh ar, was I in it?

LUCY Yeah.

TOM Good was I?

LUCY Will yer pack in tekkin' the piss? I'm serious!

TOM *(Sighs)* You had a dream?

LUCY On'y... an' I know this sounds daft -

TOM Goo on -

LUCY It weren't just a dream.

TOM Well what was it?

LUCY It was... real; it was real, Tom - honest, n' I'm scared.

TOM Y' was sleep-walkin'; it was a dream, tha's all.

LUCY No it wern't; I was alive in it, n' you an' all an' him - John Atkin.

TOM Nobody's alive in a dream.

LUCY We was alive in this room, n' it was a long time agoo, n' we all spoke different, n' dressed different, but it was us; it really was us, Tom... I think... I think we've been here before.

TOM Y' what?

LUCY N' we've gorra get out of here before summat bad 'appens.

TOM It already has, Luce - remember?

LUCY Dun' leave me 'ere!

TOM I'll be back. *(Goes to exit)*.

LUCY *(Shouts, tearful)* Why dun' yer listen t' me?!

TOM *(Shouts back)* Pack it in, will yer?!

LUCY Dun' leave me alone with *him!*

TOM Pack it in!

TOM *opens the door. JOHN is standing there, holding two mugs of tea. TOM reacts.*

*Shit!*

JOHN Morning - I was just about to knock. I heard a bit of a commotion - everything all right?

TOM Yeah, her's... her's had a bit of a nightmare.

JOHN            (*Entering*) Understandable in the circumstances. Brought you some tea.

TOM            (*Taking the mugs from him*) Oh, thanks mate.

JOHN            And some bandage for your arm.

TOM            ‘Preciate it.

                  LUCY *stands, staring at JOHN.*

                  Cup o’ tea, Luce?

LUCY            (*Nods*) Yeah... yeah thanks.

TOM            You all right now?

LUCY            I... I dunno, I think so.

TOM            It was a nightmare, tha’s all.

LUCY            Must’ve bin, I s’pose.

TOM            Must’ve bin. (*Hands her a mug*) Here - cup of tea’ll sort you out.

LUCY            Thanks.

JOHN            Got some bad news for you, I’m afraid.

TOM            Wha’s ‘appened?

JOHN            That bloke...

TOM            Dead..?

JOHN            Stepped up the search for you; Police are crawling all over the City:  
roadblocks, the lot!

                  LUCY *begins to cry.*

TOM            He’s dead?

JOHN            Looks that way.

TOM            Christ no!

JOHN            I wouldn’t go out there for a while.

TOM            (*Nods*) No.

JOHN            You’ll be all right here.

TOM            Thanks... He’s dead then?

*Pause*

                  I dunno what t’ say... I din’t think he’d die, like... S’ murder then, n’ it?

JOHN            (*Nods*) Murder.

TOM            Christ..! I dunno.

*Pause*

LUCY            Who are you?

JOHN            What?

LUCY       Who is he?

TOM         Luce -

LUCY       Wha's gooin' on 'ere?

TOM         Her had a nightmare.

LUCY       He knows what I mean.

TOM         For God sake, Luce stop it will yer? You'm gooin' doo-bloody-lalley!

LUCY       They am here?

TOM         What?

LUCY       The Clubmen, Tom; Cromwell's men in the City!

TOM         "Cromwell?" Who the bloody hell's he when he's at home?

JOHN        You have nothing to fear.

TOM         He the landlord I decked? Y' talkin' about his heavies, or summat?  
*(The penny drops)* You'm talkin' about *Oliver* Cromwell, n' yer?

LUCY        Then may we not leave now?

JOHN        In good time, Maid.

TOM         Oh dun' start with all that crap again! What is it with you two?

JOHN        They're billeted below and know only that Thomas is here; you're my  
secret still, I won't allow them upstairs. But they want to speak to him.

LUCY        Tis not right: they am drunken, unruly fellows; who knows what harm  
they might do to him?

TOM         Pack it in, Luce!

LUCY        But what if these men find fault in your actions?

TOM         I said that's enough!

LUCY        They am desperate an' angry! You should not goo down theer!

              TOM *grabs hold of her and shakes her.*

TOM         Snap out of it, Lucy! Cum on girl, wha's gooin' on here?!

LUCY        I dunno; I'm frightened, Tom!

TOM         S' all right, just snap out o' this; you'm... you'm (*Upset*)... wha's gooin' on?

LUCY        There's... there's summat really bad 'appened, to us Tom...

              JOHN *tries to help her to the bed.*

JOHN        Looks like a bit of a fit to me; lie down for a while.

              TOM *pushes him away.*

TOM         Leave her alone, you!

JOHN        Okay mate, only trying to help.

TOM         You doin' summat funny to her?

JOHN Me?

TOM Slipped summat into her tea, 'ave yer?

JOHN You both drunk the tea, don't be daft; I wouldn't do that.

TOM What was yer doin' with all that funny talk?

JOHN What funny talk?

TOM You know -

JOHN I haven't got a clue what you're on about.

*Pause*

TOM You was talkin' funny again, Luce; sayin' strange stuff. you were.

*Pause*

JOHN Look, I'll clear out of your way. You're upset; it's only natural after the news.

*Pause*

TOM Yeah... yeah all right.

JOHN I wouldn't harm Lucy. You shouldn't accuse me of things like that.

TOM Well y' know like y' said, wi' the news an' all... I think we'm all a bit on edge, like.

JOHN I'll get you some grub later - some chips, yeah?

TOM Great.

JOHN Take it easy.

JOHN *exits.*

TOM Am I gooin' mad?

LUCY Hold me, Tom; hold me close, please?

TOM (*Embraces her*) I'm out o' me depth 'ere, Luce. I 'ave no idea what's gooin' on.

LUCY Nor me. But we ought t' get out of 'ere - right now.

TOM Please Luce, bear wi' me; I'm scared as hell. He's dead n' the filth am crawlin' round everywhere... just one more night, eh?

LUCY I wanna goo now, Tom.

TOM We've got nowhere else we can hide... just one more night?

LUCY Tha's all then, promise?

TOM Promise.

*They freeze in their embrace as the room is plunged into darkness.  
The radio fills the space with static, but phases into a moving fiddle lament.*

## SCENE 4

LUCY and TOM enter the attic room, 17TH CENTURY, followed by JOHN. They are all dressed in costume of the period. JOHN carries a bible.

- TOM Our thanks, sir. I know not what might 'ave befall us if you hadn't found us when you did.
- LUCY We'd been hidin' there for some time.
- TOM If we'd been found...
- LUCY The soldier's asks no questions.
- TOM Tis a gory sight about here.
- LUCY The river is red wi' blood - still.
- TOM They am drunk on victory.
- LUCY Stolen ale an' all.
- JOHN It's an outrage; mutinous debased scoundrels, the lot!
- TOM My father's house is burned - all is gone.
- JOHN It gives me great offence to see The Lord's Army behaving so. All is gone you say?
- TOM All - my father, mother an' sisters 'ave fled to Malvern or thereabouts.
- JOHN You're safe here a while, and can venture out again when they've done with their plundering. It's an outrage that worthy citizens should be so dispossessed. Men should not revel in victory like barbarous heathens, but thank Christ for deliverance and the end of England's woes.
- TOM Aye.
- Pause*
- TOM Tis a fine house.
- LUCY We am grateful that a gentleman like you should tek pity on such as us.
- JOHN (SMILES) It's a small service and one that I am obliged to perform. As the psalms teach us: "Blessed is he that considereth the poor: The Lord will deliver him in time of trouble".
- TOM Amen t' that.
- LUCY Amen.
- JOHN So welcome a while. What are your names?
- Pause*
- Come, you've no reason to fear me; I'm a friend that is moved to rescue you from the disorder around, that is all. My name is John Atkin.
- TOM Thomas Denham.
- LUCY Lucy, Lucy Sheldon, so please you.
- JOHN (Smiles) Tis a pretty name.

LUCY           (*Nods*).

JOHN           Come smile now, good Maid, this haven is safe.

LUCY           (*Smiles*) Thank you sir.

JOHN           It's good to see a fair Maid smile again in this City.

LUCY           Your pardon, sir; it has been a weary time for us all. It is long since I 'ave been wont to smile.

JOHN           Then practice here, Maid; this is a safe refuge, and happily now your troubles are at an end.

LUCY           (*Curtsies*) I will endeavour to, sir.

JOHN           (*Suddenly to TOM*) I will find a bandage for your wound. Was it a musket-ball?

*Pause*

TOM            No... no it were no musket... it were... I did trip, now I recall.

LUCY           That was it, Tom - by that picket fence at Lower Wick.

TOM            Lower Wick, aye.

JOHN           No mind - we shall dress it anon. I'll search out a blanket for the bed.

TOM            Our thanks, sir.

JOHN           It's a small service.

                  JOHN *exits*.

LUCY           (*SIGHS*) Do you think we should stay here, Tom?

TOM            What choice have we?

LUCY           We could tek our chance an' make away right now.

TOM            Ar, wi' the streets awash with riotin' soldiers?

*Pause*

LUCY           What think you of this John Atkin?

TOM            He has rescued us.

LUCY           Ar, but why?

TOM            He's a citizen here, sees us in our distress, that's all.

LUCY           He seems strange t' me.

TOM            Calm yourself now, Lucy. The danger's passed - he's a friend.

LUCY           What was his business at Powick Bridge?

TOM            A man may walk where he will.

LUCY           At dead of night, two days after that terrible battle?

TOM            A man may walk where he choose.

LUCY           Amongst the dead littered about the fields?

TOM            Lucy, tis enough that we am 'ere an' not shivering under that bridge!  
You should not 'ave cum lookin' for me.

LUCY           I had to.

TOM            They tek wenchas as an' when they see 'em; leaves 'em ravished  
an' bloody they does, the bastards!

LUCY           Do'st thou love me, Tom?

TOM            I'll show thee how I love thee, straw-brain lass!  
*He pulls her to him and kisses her.*

LUCY           Sayest thou love me.

TOM            *(Smiles)* I love thee.

LUCY           Tis sweet to hear thee say it, Tom.

TOM            *(Laughs)* Straw-brain lass!  
*They kiss again*  
Thank you for seeking me out. It was a rash act, but I'm glad t' see you again.

LUCY           I never thought I would see *you* again.

TOM            T'was a bloody sight... I killed a man, I think.

LUCY           T'was a battle.

TOM            If I'd spared him my pike, he would've finished *me*.

LUCY           T'was a battle. Who would not choose their own life if the balance were so?

TOM            I would I had not killed him.

LUCY           Tis over now.

TOM            Aye.  
*LUCY'S face suddenly changes. she looks scared; staring at something that isn't there.*

LUCY           Tom - I can see somethin'.

TOM            What is it?

LUCY           I cannot tell... I'm scared, Tom. Summat's 'appenin' t' me; we shouldn't've cum here!

TOM            It's safe here, dun' grieve so, Lucy.

LUCY           Why did I listen t' Mel?

TOM            What sayest thou?

LUCY           If we hadn't broke into the squat, none o' this would've 'appened!  
*Pause as lucy comes out of her vision.*

Tom..?

TOM I am here.

LUCY Tom, I 'ave seen...

TOM Aye?

LUCY I 'ave seen ourselves... yet it was not ourselves... I did see...

TOM What did you see?

*JOHN enters with blankets, a bandage and a poultice.*

JOHN I have a poultice and bandage for your wound. Come let me see it -

TOM No... I will...

LUCY I will tend him anon, if it please you?

JOHN Come, be not churlish. I have some small knowledge of these things: the longer ignored, the more readily infected it may become. Come - let me see your arm.

*TOM reluctantly rolls up his sleeve, JOHN inspects the wound. he looks concerned and shakes his head at it, TOM and LUCY look worried, but JOHN laughs.*

It's not so bad. You shall live another day. (*Laughs*).

*TOM and LUCY laugh in reply. JOHN wipes the poultice on the bandage and passes it to LUCY after all.*

It has been long since this house has heard the sound of a pretty Maid's laughter. (*To TOM*) Thour't blessed to find such treasure about these parts, Thomas Denham.

LUCY It's I that am blessed. He is a good homely lad, sir, an' one that many a maid about would gladly call her troth-plaint.

TOM (*Laughs*) I am only a man.

LUCY *My Lover boy!*

*Pause*

TOM Lucy, are you well?

LUCY Why am yer dressed like that?

TOM Tis all I 'ave.

LUCY S' like we'm in a film, or summat.

JOHN Tis a strange language you speak, child.

LUCY I'm not here, am I?

TOM Lucy, what ails thee?

JOHN Tis a fit of some kind - let me help you to bed, Lucy.

*JOHN takes LUCY'S arm, TOM intervenes, pushing him away.*

TOM I will do that if you please!

LUCY Tom, do not abuse our host so!

TOM I... I am sorry, sir.

JOHN I meant only to help her.

TOM I am truly sorry.

JOHN I do not take her for some flax-wench.

TOM Tis but the times an' all our woes that make my temper stir so.

LUCY Tis but the times as he says, sir - he means no harm.

JOHN Then there is no offence... you should rest a while. Sleep now and I'll bring you fresh news of the streets tomorrow.

LUCY Our thanks, sir.

TOM Ar, our thanks.

JOHN God grant you peaceful sleep.  
JOHN *exits.*

LUCY Why did you push him, Tom?

TOM I care not for the way he has been watchin' you.

LUCY We must tek care, Tom. I wonder we should not quit this place tonight?

TOM No, we'll sleep tonight an' I'll venture out tomorrow.

LUCY Ar, I'm knackered, I am!  
LUCY *begins to make the bed.*

TOM "Knackered?" What means that?

LUCY Tired - *knackered.*

TOM Lucy, thou'rt speakin' nonsense.  
LUCY *stops suddenly, frozen.*

LUCY (*Begins to cry*) Am I here, Tom?

TOM (*Embraces her, concerned*) Aye, where else should you be?

LUCY I know not... I know not. I am frightened, Tom!

TOM All will be well - we're safe for now.

LUCY Somethin' strange is grippin' me... I'm seein' things in the air that are not... an' yet they are; I know not how t' tell it.

TOM Let's sleep - you're tired.

LUCY (*Climbs into bed*) Aye, maybe sleep will cure me of this odd mood.

TOM (*Climbs in next to her*) Art thou *knackered* then? (*Laughs*).

LUCY        “Knackered?” What mean you?

TOM         *(Laughs)* Pay me no heed.

LUCY        *(Smiles)* I love thee, *my homely lad!*

*They kiss.*

TOM         *Straw-brain lass! (Laughs).*

*TOM blows out the candle. radio static again fills the space, invaded by many people whispering in ill-timed unison parts of psalm xll:*

*Blessed is he that considereth the poor: The Lord will deliver him in time of trouble.*

*The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive; and he shall be blessed upon the earth; and thou will not deliver him unto the will of his enemies.*

*And if he comes to see me, he speaketh vanity: his heart gathereth iniquity to itself..*

*An evil disease say they cleaveth fast unto him...*

*All that hate me whisper together against me: against me do they devise my hurt.*

*When shall he die and his name perish?*

*The final line is spoken louder and reverberates around the room.*

*LUCY sits up suddenly, breathing heavy with fear. she looks around her to see where the voices are coming from and down at TOM, who seems to be sinking steadily into sleep. She snuggles down again, frightened.*

*The room is plunged into darkness. Radio static and 17th century music (perhaps a wild jig played on a fiddle).*

## SCENE 5

*17TH CENTURY. The next day. TOM is pacing the room, LUCY is lying in bed, unwell.*

TOM How are you now, Lucy?

LUCY I still cannot breath well.

TOM Tis a fever; I pray it does not grip you.

LUCY I am still for leavin' this place, Tom.

TOM Tis not safe out there yet; and how can you venture out at present - you can hardly stand?

LUCY I can see only misfortune in this room. I saw...

TOM They am but false spirits you've seen; a hot dream brought about by your fever, I warrant.

LUCY They am not false spirits, Tom: they am flesh an' bone...you an' me... an' *him*.

TOM "In a strange country that is here an' yet is not?"

LUCY That is how it is.

TOM How is it we can live here both now an' then?

LUCY I know not, but it is so. I wish that you believed me.

TOM How can I Lucy? Tis...

LUCY Madness?

TOM Tis your fever speakin'.

LUCY It was not a dream!

*Pause. LUCY IS breathing heavily. TOM puts his hand on her forehead.*

I'm sorry.

TOM What for?

LUCY I'm a burden to thee.

TOM Nay, do not say that; you are my Lucy! How can you be a burden?

LUCY God bless thee, Tom.

TOM *(Kneeling by her)* Your breathing is heavy still?

LUCY *(Nods)*.

TOM The air is stale in here.

*TOM goes to open the shutters, but walks into JOHN, who has just entered the open door, carrying a jug of water and a lint cloth.*

*(Reacts)* Christ in heaven!

JOHN "They meet with darkness in the daytime and grope in the noonday as in the night".

TOM Aye, tis dark in here. May we not ope' the shutters?

JOHN           And reveal yourself to the passing crowd?

TOM            Oh ar, I had not thought of that.

                  JOHN *places the jug on the table.*

JOHN           How fare you now, Maid?

LUCY           I am hot still, an' my breath comes as through a wheezy bellows.

                  JOHN *dips the cloth in the water, sits beside LUCY on the bed and begins to mop her forehead.*

JOHN           Here's some water to calm your fever -

TOM            It's not for you to minister to us: you've done us more favour than we should expect. I'll mop her brow.

JOHN           Tis no trouble... How does that feel now?

LUCY           Very well, sir.

TOM            I'm sorry to intrude upon your hospitality - we'll leave as soon as Lucy is well.

JOHN           *You* may leave if you will; Lucy can stay here safely till she recovers.

LUCY           I won't stay without Tom, sir. I thank you for your kind offer, but we am bound together in all things - where he goes, so shall I.

JOHN           So be it.

*Pause*

TOM            Soldiers still around?

JOHN           They are.

TOM            We *will* leave soon.

JOHN           When this sweet child is well enough.

LUCY           What're you doin' - chattin' me up?

JOHN           What sayest thou?

LUCY           Am I s'posed t' be impressed?

TOM            Tis the fever talkin' in her.

LUCY           No it en't - *We thought we was safe wi' you!*

JOHN           (*Dipping the cloth*) Hush now child, thour't rambling. (*Mops her brow again*)  
Let me wipe away this odd affliction.

LUCY           I... I can carry a message there..!

JOHN           A message? To who?

LUCY           To us... I... I dunno where I am... I...

TOM            Lucy, calm yourself - I beg thee!

LUCY           I... can't breath!

TOM            Lord help us! Do not let slip thy soul yet!

LUCY I... I can't breath, Tom - help me, please?!

TOM GRABS *her up, but JOHN pushes him away.*

TOM By Christ, I'll strike you dead for this! Let her alone!

JOHN Run down to the scullery and fetch more water!

TOM What..?

JOHN Do as I say, thou dullard! I know how to deal with this.

TOM *hesitates.*

Take the jug and go!

TOM *exits. JOHN lifts LUCY into his arms - she is frozen, her eyes open, staring.*

Still in your fit?

*He kisses her and she comes to, gasping for breath. she lies back on her pillow, looking at JOHN.*

LUCY Where have I been? I felt I was in a pit - a dark bottomless pit?

JOHN "I waited patiently for The Lord; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry."  
Thanks be that God has seen fit to make me your deliverer.

LUCY My deliverer?

JOHN I am your angel, Lucy.

LUCY I do not understand you.

JOHN I gave you breath.

TOM *rushes in with a jug of water.*

TOM She's recovered!

JOHN Praise God!

TOM How did you bring her to?

JOHN I gave her breath.

TOM Thank you sir... an' please pardon my oath; I was feared for her life an' thought you meant her harm.

JOHN I'm a constant man, Thomas Denham, and I have given you both shelter - why should I take you in to do you harm?

LUCY I'm well now, Tom.

TOM I beg your forgiveness - my temper oft' runs ahead of my heart.

JOHN *takes the jug and offers it up to LUCY'S lips.*

JOHN Sip this now, Lucy. Your angel shall care for thee.

*She sips.*

TOM We'll stay a while longer then, if it please you?

JOHN *doesn't reply. Crackle of radio as the space is filled with darkness. First 17th century lament on fiddle, then it phases to some hard-core techno.*

## SCENE 6

*Evening, the present. LUCY and TOM are asleep in bed. The door opens and JOHN enters carrying a candle lamp and a leather jug, he is a bit drunk. He gently wakes LUCY.*

- JOHN           (Softly) Lucy..? Lucy, are you awake?
- LUCY           (Waking) Eh? Who is it?
- JOHN           *Shh!* It's me, John; don't wake him; I just wanted...
- LUCY           What?
- JOHN           Can I talk to you?
- LUCY           (*Gets out of bed*) Wha's up then? Summat wrong?
- JOHN           Nothing wrong, no... I've got some perry here; wondered if you fancied a drop?
- LUCY           Perry? Wha's that?
- JOHN           I can't sleep; why don't you join me downstairs for a while, be nice to chat?
- LUCY           No, best not - if Tom wakes he'll wonder where I am.
- JOHN           Well... have a swig now, then.
- LUCY           I... dunno.
- JOHN           Go on, won't hurt-
- Pause, she takes the jug and sips.*
- (*Smiles*) Tis a strong draft, is it not?
- LUCY           It is sweet.
- JOHN           Go, drink some more -
- She sips again and smiles at him.*
- LUCY           It is good perry, sir.
- JOHN           (*Smiles*) I finished a jug myself before this.
- Pause*
- LUCY           You live here alone?
- JOHN           The Lord saw fit to take my wife to his bosom some years since, and so too my child who was yet growing within her.
- LUCY           That is a great loss to bear.
- JOHN           A great loss.
- Pause*
- LUCY           What do you do about the City?
- JOHN           She died while I was fighting at Naseby.
- LUCY           You were at Naseby?

JOHN My last battle. Yet I have been a useful citizen all this time... I was a merchant about Worcester before, and will be again now this war at last is over.

LUCY Thank God.

JOHN Aye, thank God for our deliverance. And so now to thee -

LUCY What of me, sir?

JOHN Now that I am to make money and trade again, I will be need of some assistance about this place. There are many empty rooms here; you may stay if you wish, and I will find you employment.

LUCY Thank you, sir, but Tom an' I will not stay hereabouts.

JOHN Oh... and why may that be?

LUCY We... we mean to seek out our families.

JOHN You would not get so fair an offer at this time. I think you could be happy here with your angel.

LUCY Tis a kind offer, but we will not stay - we're weary o' this City an' our fortune lies elsewhere now.

*Pause*

JOHN How came that wound upon his arm?

LUCY As I have said, sir: t'was injured by a fall as we ran across...

JOHN A fall?

LUCY No, t'was not a fall, t'was... I can't rightly remember now; it was...

JOHN There are many fugitives about the streets of this City who fought at Powick Bridge this Wednesday past.

LUCY What means this to me?

JOHN Did Thomas fight there for the King?

*LUCY grows agitated; she tries not to cry.*

LUCY No..!

JOHN For if he did, then he is by name a traitor - enemy of the state and subject to the authority and justice of Parliament.

LUCY Tis not so; he was not at Powick Bridge. We was set upon by renegade soldiers as I 'ave told you, an' after the heat an' fury of battle, they call us poor people's property their booty - my parent's home is all but gone an' we was chased through the City.

JOHN To Powick Bridge?

LUCY We... we was chased there, sir.

JOHN Hiding amongst the army - how so?

*Pause. LUCY is on the edge of tears.*

His wound was caused by musket-shot. I've served as a soldier and know the mark it leaves upon the flesh - tis a musket-wound, tis clear.

LUCY (*Begins to cry*) Sir, I beg thee..! I... He was pressed by his Lord, sir - what was he to do? To refuse...

JOHN Refuse, aye.

LUCY Would have caused his family to have their land an' means to live taken from them. These are strange times: one moment it's for King, next it's Parliament. Many a lad here's been pressed by King's troops; they follow or die.

JOHN Better to die for God than join league with the devil.

LUCY His Lord commanded him; he had no choice in the matter.

JOHN This is grave news, Maid. When I took you in, you gave me to believe you were merely fleeing the rioting soldiers.

LUCY What was we t' do? We was desperate.

JOHN This is grave news, and I'm bound now as a citizen of Worcester and officer of General Cromwell's army to report this matter.

LUCY *An officer?* (*Crying*) What will come of this?

JOHN I cannot say. But honesty prevails me to tell you, heavy matters may befall this intelligence.

LUCY Don't betray him to Parliament. He didn't want to fight for King an' would 'ave quitted the cause at fust chance.

JOHN To fight for King is enough.

LUCY Master, I beseech thee, seek charity in your heart an' pardon him? He is no villain, sir, but a homely lad with no care for fighting.

JOHN I cannot let you go now, Lucy; or I myself would wear the badge of traitor.

LUCY I beg you - turn your back on us an' let us slip into the night?

JOHN It's not possible... Yet if you would endeavour to save the lad..?

LUCY What is it, sir? What must I do?

*Pause*

JOHN I'm your angel, am I not? Stay here with me and keep me contented.

LUCY I do not think...

JOHN I'm a wealthy man, well rooted in society. You would be comfortable and want for nothing.

LUCY Sir, I beseech thee - let us goo?

JOHN All's not lost yet, Maid. So dry your pities and think more on the suit I propose. But for now, I must fasten the lock and hold you within.

LUCY Nay, do not hold us here?!

*He exits and locks the door.*

(Screams) Tom! Tom! Wake - he's locked us in!

TOM (Waking) What? Wha's gooin' on?

LUCY He's an officer of Cromwell's army an' knows all about you!

TOM *leaps up and holds her, comforting.*

TOM Luce, Luce, calm down.

LUCY But he hath bolted the door!

TOM "He hath" what?

LUCY They'll arrest thee for a traitor!

TOM S' all right, Luce; you'm sleep-walkin' again, tha's all. C'mon - snap out on it now.

LUCY The door's locked - we'm prisoners.

TOM He en't locked us in - look?

TOM *goes to the door and tries to open it, but it really is locked.*

Wha's gooin' on? Wha's he up to?

LUCY What shall we do?

TOM I dunno... I... He's... I mean, *Cromwell*, yer say - an officer of Cromwell's army?

LUCY Aye.

TOM Then we am done for.

LUCY Oh Tom, fate has been cruel to us!

TOM (*Almost crying*) Damn this war! I'm sick t' the soul on it: my family an' neighbours 'ave bin abused an' murdered, our livelihood snatched from us, med t' fight against my will for a cause I can make no sense of... an' now this!

LUCY What shall we do?

TOM What can we do but wait... wait an' see what befalls.

LUCY I love thee.

TOM (*Embraces her*) Aye, tis all we 'ave left us now, please God. Thour't mine, Lucy an' I am all your chattels for what it's worth.

LUCY That is all I wants.

TOM I could have made thee happy!

LUCY All is not lost yet, Tom; perchance our story will move them to some mercy on our part.

TOM (*Smiles*) Aye, let us not lose all hope yet. We am honest people, they will see that... But Christ damn this bloody war!

*They embrace. The static of the radio echoes eerily into the space: a 17th century setting of a psalm is sung by a woman and a man as the room is plunged into darkness.*

**Pentabus Theatre tour, September- November 1999.**

**The Stage** - For the second time this year, the swan theatre has hosted a new play by Midlands writer Alex Jones, this time as part of Pentabus Theatre Company's tour. Jones' theme, inspired by the Civil war and the Battle of Worcester, is an interesting one. Namely the repeated patterns of human experience stretching across the centuries. He taps into the eeriness that old buildings can give, of an almost felt presence of those who have been there before, and makes this his starting point for an intriguing psychological drama. A young peasant couple, on the run after the battle (he fought for the wrong side) are sheltered in the attic of his rambling, half-timbered house. Three hundred years later, in the same room, a stranger shelters another couple on the run from a squat in Worcester, where threatened with eviction, the young man has attacked the landlord. The intermeshing of their stories, mainly achieved by clever use of language, gives a poignant impression of the helpless lives of the poor throughout the ages and the desperate struggle to survive. The play's power is strengthened by two touching performances as the young lovers from Victoria Hayes (making her professional debut) and Alex Harcourt-Smith, who both project great vulnerability, and the Mephistophelian stranger, played with a sinister intensity by Kim Durham. Directed by Theresa Heskins, with a tight atmospheric set from Arnim Friess, this should be a play to touch local audiences on Pentabus' circuit. *Ann Fitzgerald.*

**Malvern Gazette** - In your face, up close and personal, the three players from Penatbus Theatre gave Ledbury a treat in their electric performance of *The Bridge* at the Burbage Hall. A well-crafted juxtaposition of today's disenfranchised youth with Cromwellian fighting and troubles, the story told with Cromwellian fighting and troubles, the story told of a young couple deeply in love, spanning the centuries pursued by a malevolent Rigsby-like landlord with intentions, of course, on the girl. It had us on the edge of our seats and engrossed in the interplay and interpolations of the trouble both then and now, police became militia and time stood still. The individual characters were extraordinarily crafted with an outstanding first performance by Victoria Hayes as Lucy, supported by Alex Harcourt-Smith as Tom, her boyfriend, together with a solid well-timed Kim Durham. The ending was pure Edgar Poe with the villain trapped in a web of his own creation. Excellent lighting and effects, together with the choice of venue, made it real. Pentabus delivered a quality of acting and professionalism that you would have to travel a long way to better. *Spencer Lane. Mouthpiece Theatre, The Bulls Head, Inkberrow, October 2002.*

**Worcester Evening News** - *Thriller play is first rate* - History is doing more than repeating itself in this fantastically innovative and well-crafted play by Worcester playwright Alex Jones. Supernatural chamber piece, *The Bridge*, follows Lucy (Naomi Gudge) and Tom (Laurence Aldridge), two squatters on the run from the police. A mysterious stranger John Atkin (Adrian Bouchet) offers them shelter in the attic of an old Worcester building. But the pair have more than the police to worry about when Lucy begins to remember things that happened to her in the room hundreds of years ago. It becomes clear this is more than just *deja vu* and there are darker forces at work. Staged by Mouthpiece, in the pub's small room, the audience is in the thick of the action, sometimes uncomfortably so. Performances by the cast are first rate; coping with the fraught emotions that have to be convincingly conveyed in inexplicable circumstances. The ending avoids a dissatisfying ambiguity, but does, on occasion tread a very thin line between the sublime and the ridiculous. Writer Alex Jones is the man of the moment with his play *River's Up* also running at the Worcester's Swan Theatre. This refreshing and gripping play boosts his reputation as a writer to be reckoned with. *The Bridge* plays at The Bull's Head until Sunday. *David Lewins.*