**Blue Line Day**

(a 15 minute drama by Claire Booker)

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 **Characters**

Michael Dankworth: a 35 year old sales director.

Rachel Sharpe: his 34 year old wife, a teacher.

 **Props and Set**

The first floor study of Michael and Rachel’s home. An area of free space, stage left, represents the bathroom. Props include a pair of fish net stockings, a hands-free phone, a blister pack of tablets, and waste paper bin.

*Bird song. Soft evening light floods into the study. Michael wears smart work trousers, a shirt and tie. He is in the middle of an angry phone conversation. Rachel stands extreme stage left, bare-foot and wearing a long silk dressing gown. Her eyes are fixed on a pair of bathroom scales on the floor.*

Michael *(yelling into the receiver)* Too right you fucking are! *(hesitates, still on phone)* Sorry. Wrong number. *(he slams the phone down, then paces the room)*

 Today of all days. She knew I was up against it. She knew the shit was going to hit the fan. But no, I have to leave work at six – at six! Drive home like a man possessed, as if I’m running some kind of transfusion service. *(Rachel steps onto the scales and looks down to take a reading)*

And now - silence of the lambs. *(pause)* “Relax,” I said. “Take a bath, splash on some Eau de Femme. *(Rachel moves the scales slightly and weighs herself again)* She thinks it breaks me – these long, manipulative silences. Well she’s wrong. *(shouting towards the door)* It gives me time to think. *(Rachel swivels round at his shout, then checks the scales again)*

She’ll emerge, eventually. She has no choice. Today is a blue line day. Like the spawning salmon, she must leap the rapids of frustration, traverse the rocks of humiliation and hurl herself at my body simply in order to breed. *(sudden anxiety)* Oh God. I’m going to flunk it again.

Rach I know he says it’s not my looks. I know he says he likes me as I am. But if it’s not my looks, what else is it?

Michael It was alright at first – a refined little tick, tick, tick, tick of the biological clock. But everyone in the known universe started to fall pregnant and now it’s a mighty great pendulum-swinging, decibel-defying monster of a clock that goes BONG . . . BONG . . . BONG down every nerve fibre of my body.

Rach One sperm. That’s all I’m asking. One sperm out of 300 million.

Michael (*to himself*) This can’t go on, Michael. You have to take control. For her sake. For your sake. We have to split. (*Michael crosses to the door and listens for a moment*) And yet. I can’t leave her. Not after all these years. We’re umbilically connected. *(he loosens his tie and removes it)*

Rach*(opening her dressing gown to reveal a sexy outfit)* ‘Britney Satin Chemise’ – that’s a phrase I never thought I’d hear myself say. *(she examines herself nervously in the mirror, feeling down her contours until she reaches the buttocks. She groans with frustration)*

Michael Why is it so hard for me to find her sexy? She used to be sexy. Dangerously sexy. *(he sits down at the table and stares at the laptop)*

Rach *(she takes a pair of fishnet stockings from the carrier bag)* Nineteen pounds the pair. Fantasy doesn’t come cheap. *(she balances one foot on the stool and pulls on one of the stockings)* Is it overkill, though? Does it make me look like . . . *(she observes her leg)* Well, it does what is says on the tin. *(she pulls on the second stocking during the following speech)*

Michael Porn. Not many men can say their partner encourages them - nay - orders them to surf sleaze. But here I am, dutifully plumbing the depths of human perversion. *(indicates the screen)* Look at it. Where’s the love in that? Some poor trafficked Slovakian dining off a Bavarian plumber. *(he rises angrily)* This is no way to conceive a child. Where’s the respect? Where’s the honesty? *(he crosses to the window and breathes the air as if smelling something lovely)* Nothing says Spring like the smell of lilac. *(sound of a black bird singing. He looks out at the garden)* Blackbird braving the neighbourhood cats to feed its young. Of course I’ll make a good father. It’s hard-wired. *(pause)* But wires get twisted. History repeats itself. What right have I got to bring an innocent child into this mess? What right has she got to force me?

(*Rachel has put her hair up with a clip and observes the effect in the mirror)*

She’s got me on Brewer’s yeast, Zinc, Selenium, C vits, B vits, two raw egg yokes a day - whisked. Not to mention those God awful Chinese herbs. Hairy Goat Weed, for Christ’s sake! It stinks the house out. And now. *(he grabs a strip of tablets from the table)* Viagra has reared its ugly head. *(angrily throws the pack into the bin)* Well sod that!

Rach *(closes her eyes and recites a mantra)* I am fruitful. My womb is opening to the universe. (*she touches her belly*) Come, beautiful life and float inside me.

Michael And yet . . . and yet. I can’t imagine never seeing her again. Holding her is the best part of the bed.

Rach *(opens her eyes)* It didn’t used to be like this.

Michael *(he crosses to the window)* The first time I saw her, two rows ahead of me in the lecture hall – blown away! This amazing girl, bright clashing clothes, cheek bones like razors, and when she got up, a bum to die for. She made me work hard for her, though. It was a month before she let me kiss her! I had to spend weeks chiselling away, whittling her down. *(pause)* And then, that Whitsun . . . *(he closes his eyes)* Lying on the sand. The old tartan blanket. *(pause)* Night sky beginning to bite. Warm feel of her mouth. *(he lets his hand move up his thigh)* Letting my hand stray along her thigh. Muscles tightening. Expecting her to pull away, but suddenly . . . no border control. As if she’s already decided. Easy, easy. Under the knicker-line. Slow clamber down, skirt the cleft, fingertip sliding through the soft, wet . . . Her body tilting, legs stretching, yes . . . God. Yes. Rach? *(clutching his crotch, he shouts)* Rach! Snake on the loose! *(Rachel spins round and rapidly exits)* Hand on the tiller, Michael. Hold her steady.

Rach *(re-enters, into the study, running)* Are you . . . ?

Michael Quick!

Rach Hold on. *(she struggles to get out of her clothing)*

Michael *(anxiously)* Oh God.

Rach No.

Michael God.

Rach No! (*rushes towards him)*

Michael *(he turns away. They both stand in wretched silence. Michael straightens himself slowly)* Sorry.

Rach Why didn’t you call me sooner?

Michael I was thinking of Morecombe Bay. I was thinking of us. I didn’t need any of that stuff. *(indicates computer)*

Rach And that makes me grateful, does it?

Michael Don’t be angry with me.

Rach Who should I be angry with, then? Myself? God? These flaming hooks?

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