

Backbone.
A short play by Louis Turner.

A and B sit opposite each other.

A: You're not saying much.

...

A: Have you got something to tell me?

B: Erm... No. No, I don't think so.

A: Ok, fine. No problem yeah.

...

A: Because if you did have something to tell me - now would be the time for you to tell me.

B: Well, yes, of course -

A: The very *best* time would be right now - this moment now.

B: Right...

A: Now; when I'm actually asking you - really quite politely asking you, if you have something to tell me -

B: Yes...

A: Not; at some point in the near future, when everything is out in the open and there's no going back and everyone knows you had something to tell me, myself included, and the only thing left to be said about the whole affair would be your weedy admittance of the fact that you did have something to tell me and what that thing was.

B: ... No...

A: So, with all of that in mind - do you or do you not have, in fact; something to tell me?

B: (choosing the word carefully) ... N-

A: Because if there was something you had to tell me - and you didn't tell it to me, and then you *had* to tell me, that would just be really embarrassing for you, not to mention how much time we could save if you just told me now. All that time that could be saved!

B: If I had somethi-

A: It's the amount of time saved that I really want to impress onto you. I think it's a really important point, and I'm not going to skip over it lightly because it's something I'm quite

passionate about. We're not getting any younger, and every year that I get older; the more highly I come to regard every second that passes - and every second that goes by is a second that will never return. So, if there are ways of saving time, fractions of time in the grand scheme of things - but bits of time out of *my* life nonetheless, those are things I want to be doing. And I think you should be doing too.

B: Listen, I want to save time too. Honestly.

A: Right...

B: I know we only have but fleeting moments to make something out of this little life we have.

A: Correct...

B: And we can have no idea how much time there really is for us, and that it could be at any moment that our time swiftly comes to an end, and that we aren't necessarily entitled to any longer than anyone else or even a warning of when the end is coming.

A: Ok.

B: I want to move on. I want to live my life. I want honesty too.

A: I'm glad to hear it.

B: So there you go. I have nothing to tell you, and if I did - I would tell you right away and then I wouldn't have anything to tell you again. So I hope I've cleared that up for you. I hope that sets everything straight.

A: Right.

B: Right.

A: So there's nothing to tell me.

B: No - there is nothing to tell you.

A: You have nothing at all to say.

B: Absolutely nothing.

A: Fine. Fine, there's nothing to tell me. Fine.

...

A: But Pamela is going to be in here in a minute. Not me. Pamela. You don't like Pamela do you.

B: ... No.

A: No. She think's you're not going to be persuaded to tell us... She doesn't believe that you have the backbone to come clean. She doesn't... well... you know...

B: Well, I -

A: Trust you. She think's you need more than just gentle persuasion. She likes to use her hands. Very physical is Pamela.

B: I know.

A: But I don't share Pamala's opinion. I actually think that you are very trustworthy and that you and I have a relationship - a bond. I think you are a good person, I think you do have a backbone and I think you want to tell me.

B: I really don't -

A: I do agree with her about some things though. I do think you're a liar. I think you're a very good liar and I think you aren't quite what people might think you are on the surface.

B: Ok.

A: Look I'm on your side. I'm defending you - I'm always defending you to Pamala, saying; "no - he's cool, he's alright - let me stick with him, your methods aren't required here, Pamela!"

B: Well Good.

A: She's the one who doesn't trust you, who thinks you're wasting everyone's time.

B: You're the ones who brought me here-

A: But I can't keep defending you if you're not going to confide in me. I'm treating you with a lot of respect but that respect has got to go two ways - come on... I need a bit of R.E.S.P.E.C.T. too...

B: It's nothing to do with respect - I just don't have -

A: Fine, yeah, 'course you don't. Nothing at all. Whatever you say, you're just a little saint who has no skeletons in they're closet whatsoever - and no spine to go with it for that matter...

B: No, it's not that I don't -

A: Well what if I told you that I had evidence to suggest that you *do* know something and that you *are*, in fact, hiding something from me and from Pamela and that this piece of evidence doesn't just prove that you've been lying this entire time but that you are, in fact, guilty of something a far, far cry worse than lying.

B: Well if you were saying that then that would be one thing but you're not...

A: But what if I was?...

B: ... But you're not...

A: But what if I *WAS*?...

B: You're *NOT*!

A: *BUT WHAT IF I WAS!?*

B: *BUT YOU'RE NOT, SO IT DOESN'T MATTER!*

...

A: Well I have got it. The evidence. It's right here in my pocket. It's been there the entire time. So what do you think about that?

...

A: You're not saying much.

B: Fine.

A: What?

B: Fine, you win.

A: What do you mean?

B: You're right. I *have* been lying this whole time, you're right. There is something.

A: Right...

B: So there you go.

A: So...

B: Well if you already have evidence... and you already know what it is. Why do you need me to tell you? ... If you, and Pamela have got it all worked out then - why are you bothering to question me? Just take that evidence to your people and they will do what they need to do with and then they will take me to wherever they need to take me and that will be the end of it. Nothing more to say. You're right - you've been right all along, off you pop with the evidence and I'll see you in court. ... You haven't got any 'evidence' at all have you? You've got nothing. Nothing!

...

B: Now who's not saying much?...

A: Mmmm yeah, but you wouldn't know whether they actually have evidence though, would you?

B: No, but how can they have?

A: What do you mean? These are the police! These are clever people! They have all kinds of 'evidence' for things... just because I didn't have real evidence just now - it doesn't mean they won't. They are great at finding evidence.

B: Yeah but I knew you didn't have any...

A: Well yeah that's because we know each other inside out. The real guy interrogating you won't be your brother - stupid!

B: Mmm that's true.

A: And anyway - the 'Pamela' character might have had some evidence...

B: Why did you call her Pamela?

A: After Auntie Pam.

B: Yeah but your character wouldn't call her 'Pamela' - they use Surnames, it's always like P.C. Jones or D.I. Smith. Not Pamela!

A: Yeah well, you got the point...

B: She'd at least be D.I. Pamela.

A: Fine; D.I. Pamela.

B: Give the woman some respect, she's worked hard to become a Police Officer. She went through all the... training.

A: Right well that is besides the point. The point is - *DON'T ADMIT YOU'VE DONE IT* until *AFTER* they have shown you the 'evidence', stupid.

B: Stop calling me stupid!

A: Well you are. It's you who started all this anyway. I'm just here to help.

B: Fine.

A: It's because of your *stupid* actions that you have ended up here - I'm just offering a bit of practice for when the real police inevitably turn up and arrest you.

B: Don't. I'm getting worried again now.

A: Well you should be a little bit worried. I was playing out the 'best cast scenario' just then. It's probably more likely you'd get a D.I. Pamela. You've got to be prepared.

B: I don't think I can do it. ... I might just leave the country.

A: If you left the country, they would definitely know that you did it, wouldn't they. Think about it, stupid.

B: Stop calling me *stupid!!*

A: Well you *are*!!

...

B: I wish I could speak to Mum and Dad, see what they would say...

A: Well you can't. You killed them. It's too late now, never mind - no use going on about it.

...

A: Can't ask their advice about anything ever again. Because they are dead. Because you killed them. Because you're stupid.

B: *THEY DESERVED IT!*

A: That is besides the point. You can't just go around killing people. That's how you end up in jail for a long time and that makes you go mental and that's how you turn into Dad.

B: I'm sorry! I wish I could go back. I'm sorry - *I'M SORRY!*

A: ... Shhhh. It's ok. Just sit. It's going to be ok.

...

B: What's that?

A: What?

B: Coming out of your shirt?

A: What? Nothing.

B: No it was something poking out of your shirt. What is it?

A: No it's nothing. Probably a hair or something...

B: It looked like a wire or somethi-

A: Just leave it -

B: What's that banging? Who's that at the door? Why are you just sitting there like that? What is it?!

...

A: I'm sorry.

