

Eclipse

Simon Armitage

Commissioned for *Connections 97* by the Royal National Theatre, this is a poetic drama set in Cornwall in 1999. An unseen group of adults gather on the headland to watch the eclipse of the sun, while their teenaged offspring - MIDNIGHT, Tulip, Klondike, Glue Boy and Polly and Jane - are on the beach below. A strange girl, Lucy appears to challenge each and every one of the young people and then vanishes. The action of the play alternates between the beach and the police station, where they try to make sense of and come to terms with Lucy's disappearance.

This scene is set in the police Interview Room, where MIDNIGHT, a blind boy, is the first to make his statement.

MIDNIGHT

(A police interview room) Martin Blackwood, they call me Midnight -it's a sick joke but I don't mind. Coffee please, two sugars, white - don't ask me to say that I saw, I'm profoundly blind, but I'll tell you as much as I can, all right?

Cornwall, August, as you know. There's a beach down there, seaside and all that, cliffs with caves at the back, but up on the hill there's a view looking south, perfect for watching a total eclipse of the sun. The mums and dads were up on the top, we were down in the drop - we'd just gone along for the trip, killing a few hours. You see it's like watching birds or trains, but with planets and stars, and about as much fun as cricket in my condition, or 3D. There was Glue Boy, Polly and Jane, Tulip and Klondike and me. Thing is, we were messing around in the caverns when Lucy appeared. Her mother and father were up with the rest of the spotters; she wasn't from round here. Thing is, I was different then, did a lot of praying, wore a cross, went to church, thought I was walking towards the light of the Lord -when it's as dark as it is in here, you follow any road with any torch. Lucy put me on the straight and narrow. There's no such thing as the soul, there's bone and there's marrow. It's just biology. You make your own light, follow your own nose. She came and she went. And that's as much as I know.